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Society of California Pioneers Series

Margaret Avery Rowell

MASTER TEACHER OF CELLISTS, AND HUMBLE STUDENT OF NATURE

With Introductions by
Irene Sharp,
Bonnie Hampton,
and Galen Rowell

An Interview Conducted by
Suzanne B. Riess
1982-1983

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Margaret Rowell hiking in Yosemite National Park, 1968

Photograph by Galen Rowell

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ORGANIZED 1850

THE SOCIETY OF CALIFORNIA PIONEERS

456 McALLISTER STREET • SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA 94102 • 415-861-5278

PREFACE

The purpose of The Society of California Pioneers is the collection, preservation, and proper maintenance of historical material of all kinds relating to the early days of San Francisco and California. We have since our founding in 1850 taken upon ourselves the responsibility of preserving the records and relics that are indispensible as ties binding the past to the present and future generations. Further contributing to this ambition, The Society in 1977 initiated an Oral History Series. The intent of the Series is to preserve the recollections of men and women prominent in their respective fields whose achievements, knowledge, and expertise form a significant contribution to the history and progress of California. They record in permanent form the continuation of the traditions of California's founders.

These memoirs have been created by a grant from the James Irvine Foundation. James Irvine, 1968-1947, was the son of a forty-niner, a native of California, and Director and Vice President of The Society of California Pioneers from 1928 until his death. Through the James Irvine Foundation he left an enduring legacy to the people of California.

This fifth Oral History in the Series, related by Margaret Avery Rowell, is concerned with a subject that is underdocumented and yet central to San Francisco Bay Area cultural history--and that is music. Margaret Avery Rowell's study of cello began when she was fourteen, at Oakland Technical High School. Within two years she was one of the Arion Trio, which for the next twenty years performed in San Francisco and Oakland and toured the state. She studied with European cellists Horace Britt and Stanislaus Bem, among the important nucleus of fine musicians who came to San Francisco at the time of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition and stayed to enrich the musical life of the Bay Area. She was a pioneer in educational music broadcasting, ultimately directing NBC's Standard School Broadcasts. She founded the influential California Cello Club, which introduced Pablo Casals and Mstislav Rostropovich to the Bay Area. She is a master cello teacher, internationally known and honored.

April 27, 1984

J. Roger Jobson
Executive Director
The Society of California Pioneers
San Francisco, California

SOCIETY OF CALIFORNIA PIONEERS SERIES

McLaren, Norman Loyall, Jr., *Business and Club Life in San Francisco, Relections of a Pioneer Scion,* 1978.

Shumate, Albert, M.D., *San Francisco Physician, Historian, and Catholic Layman,* 1981.

Rosenberg, Margaret Barbree, *San Bernardo Rancho and the Southern Salinas Valley, 1871-1981,* 1982.

Cunningham, Sister Catharine Julie, *A Native Daughter's Leadership in Education: College of Notre Dame, Belmont, California 1956-1980,* 1983.

Rowell, Margaret Avery, *Master Teacher of Cellists, and Humble Student of Nature,* 1984.

Dullea, Charles W., in progress

INTRODUCTION -- Irene Sharp

Margaret Rowell's Teaching

In the fall of 1958, I performed the Brahms Clarinet Trio at Holy Names College in Oakland, California. At the end of the concert the pianist, Bernhard Abramowitsch, turned to me and said, "You play well, but I know a woman who could help you improve. She doesn't play the cello any longer, but she is an unbelievable teacher." My immediate reaction was negative. "A woman? And she doesn't play! How can she possibly teach?" However, I made an appointment with her, and thus met one of the most important people in my life--Margaret Rowell.

On my way to meet Margaret Rowell, I was nervous as I drove from the Albany flats to her beautiful house in the hills above Berkeley. How would I play? What was she like? I was met at the door by a gentleman wearing thick glasses, a green eyeshade, and an apron. He had a twinkle in his eye and he used language so beautifully that I was instantly charmed. This was Margaret's husband, Professor Ed Rowell. While I studied with Margaret, I would often come early to talk with Ed and learn from his wisdom and his genial wit.

As her husband ushered me in, Margaret came along in her warm, quick, enthusiastic manner. Her brown eyes flashed behind her glasses. With her short dark hair, her simple dress and artistic jewelry, she looked elegant. She shooed Ed back to finish the dishes, closed the French doors to the living room, settled on the blue couch, and waited for me to play.

I played the Prelude from the Third Bach Suite badly, although I played as well as I could. Years later, Margaret said that it was so bad that she couldn't tell whether I was musical at all. But, typically, Margaret recognized in me someone who needed help, not necessarily someone who had the potential to become a cellist, but someone with many cellistic problems and a desire to learn.

Margaret's specialty is to take someone whose talent is not so obvious and help him uncover and realize his potential. I have heard her say at so many workshops, "I don't teach the cello, because the cello can't learn! I teach the human being." As I sat in her book-lined living room, I sensed the many other cellists who, like me, had come here with their aspirations, and learned not only cello playing but an approach to living.

Until I met Margaret I had experienced only traditional teaching. The teacher assigned an exercise or piece, and the student attempted to learn it. The material was supposed to accomplish the teaching. If the student didn't

play well, he was simply not talented, and there was nothing to be done. A basic approach to the instrument was not taught. If the student was physically immobilized while playing, he was categorized as "tight" and that was that. In the lesson itself, the teacher sat behind his instrument and the student behind his. There was not physical interaction between them.

Margaret's lessons were an enigma to me. I was used to playing a piece, not worrying too much about the actual sound I produced or how it felt physically. I never realized that there was a connection between the two. However, in those first lessons I rarely played more than one line of music. Margaret believes in teaching "from the inside out." She wants you to feel what it is like to produce an expressive tone and a beautiful phrase, not just fit yourself to a prescribed position with the hope that things will come out sounding all right. In order to reach you internally, Margaret uses imagery and direct physical contact.

During the lessons, this imagery and absorption with kinesthetics took many forms. One day when I couldn't get the feel of the bow, Margaret said, "Think of a paint brush," and had me get up and pretend to be painting her wall. When she wanted a "poured tone" she took me to the kitchen to fill a pitcher and a cup so that I could get the actual feeling of pouring. When I insisted on gripping the three ounce bow in a deathlike grasp, Margaret got her most beautiful bone china tea cup and saucer and had me manipulate them up and down and around. "Was there any danger that you would drop them?" she asked. And so I realized the feeling of an easy clinging hold to the cup--nothing like the vise-like grip that I had been using on the bow.

Margaret's repertoire was not limited to cups and saucers. She asked me whether my car had a gear shift or an automatic transmission. Then she showed me how the left hand on the cello should be shifted, as if the cellist had an automatic transmission: not with a jerk but with an easy fluid motion. To teach pronation (turning the arm toward the body), she took me to her door so that I could turn the doorknob. Then I had to demonstrate that turning the top of a jar gives a similar motion. This type of teaching was highly unusual!

Even more unusual was having Margaret pump my arm in every direction to see how stiff I was and to show me how to use my arm from my back. I crawled inside myself, hoping she would stop thumping me so we could go on and play a few more notes. Enough of this feeling stuff!

But there was more to come. In her efforts to have me feel how the power could come through from the back, she had me crash the heel of my hand on my thigh. I often walked out her front door with a few black and blue marks.

Margaret would also get me to feel her arms as she played some notes, but my fingers were blind. It took me years to "see" what she meant.

One day when I couldn't yet understand the feeling of power from my back, she encouraged me to get on the floor and crawl, feeling my weight come through my hands while still having the fingers free to move. Margaret tried this with quite a few students. Once at the San Francisco Conservatory, the President of the Conservatory had an important visitor who wanted to meet Margaret. When they arrived at her studio they found both Margaret and her student crawling on the floor. A fine how-do-you-do, and what great teaching!

However, the lessons were not all physical. There were poems and readings from Robert Frost, Omar Khayyam, and F. A. Alexander. She was fascinated with wildflowers; out came a book showing "fiddle ferns" and their similarity to the scrolls of stringed instruments. Throughout all of it was this magnetic, vibrant, energetic, enthusiastic person. Margaret has so much vitality, you know she has never lost the childlike curiosity and energy that every adult longingly remembers.

One of Margaret's favorite quotations is from Saint Exupery's Wind, Sand and Stars: "Have you ever thought...about whatever man builds...all his calculations...all the nights spent over working drafts and blueprints, invariably culminate in the production of a thing whose sole and guiding principle is the ultimate principle of simplicity? It is as if there were a natural law which ordained that to achieve this end, to refine the curve of a piece of furniture...or the fuselage of an airplane, until gradually it partakes of the elementary purity of the curve of the human breast...there must be experimentations of several generations of craftsmen. In any thing at all, perfection is finally attained not when there is no longer anything to add, but when there is no longer anything to take away...."

In her teaching, Margaret applies the principle of simplicity by using "one finger scales." This consists of playing a scale on one string with the same finger playing each of the notes. This, she believes, gives one a direct message from the brain-ear telling the finger exactly what is needed; the finger responds without interference. Often, as I was waiting for my lesson, I would hear the previous student playing a one finger scale. This happened over a period of months. I thought to myself this student must be slow, or perhaps Margaret's teaching is slow. Finally, at one lesson, I heard the Haydn D major Cello Concerto flowing beautifully from the next room. This concerto is to a cellist what Mount Everest is to a mountain climber. What Margaret and her student had accomplished with one finger scales was to have so simplified the technique--achieving a beautiful tone, shifting, intonation, and all the other fundamentals--that climbing the Mount Everest of cello literature was relatively easy as a result.

Studying with Margaret also meant participating in her California Cello Club. This club evolved from her students meeting to play for each other and in ensembles. It grew to include all the Bay Area cello teachers and their students. The Cello Club became a forum for visiting cellists. There were countless occasions when Margaret hosted Piatigorsky, Rostropovich, Starker, Casals, Greenhouse, and other famous cellists. Cello Clubbers could get a

closer view of an artist, and the great cellists became aware of the cello community in the Bay Area, a community which existed because of the spirit and artistry of this one woman. In 1958 Rostropovich visited the University of California at Berkeley, and Cello Club attended the concert in the gymnasium in full force. After the concert the University and Cello Club co-hosted a reception at which there just happened to be eight cellists with their cellos and the music to the Villa-Lobos Bachianas Brasileiras. Of course, Rostropovich participated in the impromptu concert after the concert--a memorable occasion for all.

Cello Club had wonderful Christmas get-togethers. In ensemble, forty or fifty cellists played the familiar Christmas carols. A teenager played "O Holy Night." The youngest cellist played "Between the Ox and the Grey Ass," an ancient carol. There one experienced the true Christmas feeling, with Margaret bustling about fixing punch and hundreds of brownies and arranging the greenery and holly so that it looked just right. No one who participated could ever forget these occasions.

Margaret is somewhat of an absent-minded professor. Sentences sometimes don't get finished, keys disappear, her purse--all fifty pounds of it--can't be found, the book with the quotation that she needs isn't where it is supposed to be. Her forgetfulness sometimes takes unexpected turns, as it did that first Christmas I knew her. One evening before Christmas I arrived at our apartment to find a book on Beethoven waiting for me from Margaret with the message, "Merry Christmas!" A few days later there was another package containing a bone china sugar and creamer set--"Merry Christmas from Ed and Margaret!" When we arrived at the Rowell's for Christmas dinner, Margaret was all apologies. "Oh, I forgot your Christmas present!" and she presented me with a beautifully wrapped Alexanian edition of the Bach Cello Suites. She had forgotten all the previous gifts. I was overwhelmed.

Pablo Casals came to Berkeley in 1960 for a month-long master class. Margaret had many former and present students in the class, and she worked tirelessly to get us ready to play for the great cellist. It was the experience of a lifetime. Cello Club had a potluck dinner for Casals, and we had over eighty cellists playing together in his honor. After the month of Casals was over, I called Margaret for a lesson. She said, "You don't want to study with me after having been in the master class, do you?" I had never realized that Margaret did not hold on to her students. If she felt they needed something that she couldn't give, she would send them to someone else. This is most unusual in a world of teachers where each feels that he is the only one who can do the job well.

Margaret's teaching is in a continual state of change. She is forever learning and simplifying; asking questions of students, artists, physicians, chemists; reading, and writing to people all over the world. Margaret often states in her lectures that our cellistic geniuses are largely self taught. We don't remember the names of the teachers of Casals and Rostropovich. The reason for this is that in their quest for expression through their

instrument, these "greats" chose all the right paths. They were able to play well because there was no interference between their thought processes and the physical execution of these desires. They play "from the inside out" and it looks easy. Margaret, through her inquisitiveness, great warmth, and hospitality, is able to observe these great artists. She attempts to understand their techniques and to transmit this knowledge to her students.

Because of my husband's military commitment, we left Berkeley in January, 1961, and drove with our seven-month-old baby, Wendy, to Anniston, Alabama. There we rented half of a farmhouse, and Wendy and I talked to the cows while Terry went on all night field maneuvers. This is when Margaret's teaching began to unfold within me.

There were many facets of Margaret's teaching that I could not understand. She had talked about the reservoir of power in the back, ready to be used whenever it was needed by the hands. She had talked about playing through the fingers, not with the fingers. One was supposed to cling to the fingerboard and to the bow with a suction grip, like a baby clutching a toy. I was to use a bear hug to hold and position the instrument, and I was to feel that my arms were bird wings, light and airy, but powerful.

One by one, I worked through the concepts that she had delivered to me. I began to understand the basic approach to the cello: to free myself so that I could produce music. I realized again the magic of her teaching. It does not always produce immediate results, but, like time-release capsules, her teaching keeps acting over an extended period. Although I had only studied with Margaret for a short time, during the three years when I lived in Alabama and Washington, D.C., I felt as if I were having a lesson with her every day. As I began to comprehend her teaching, I would occasionally write to Margaret and explain to her what she had tried to explain to me. Her invariable response was, "But of course, Renie!"

We returned to California in July, 1964, with two daughters. I was eager to see Margaret and to start teaching once more. From time to time I went to play for Margaret, but more often I would go to her and say, "Margaret, I have a student with such and such a problem. What should I do? What material should I use?" I loved teaching cello. Every student was unique and needed a different approach, but the principles were the same and had to be taught. Margaret has always had a great commitment to educate teachers. She feels it is the teachers who need to be instilled with the basic principles so that they can pass them on to their students. We had many wonderful exchanges where I tried out my new ideas on Margaret, and she shared her greater wisdom and ever-evolving ideas with me.

In the spring of 1968 Margaret delivered a talk in Seattle for the large Music Educators National Conference held there. Margaret rehearsed her talk many times beforehand, trying to be as succinct as possible. She asked me to come along to assist her, mainly to accompany four thirteen-year-old boys who played the Haydn C major Concerto in unison, as well as to illustrate

her teaching points. In the large audience was Paul Rolland of the University of Illinois. Paul had a grant from the Department of Health, Education and Welfare during the Johnson administration, and he was producing a string method which included a book, films and new music. Later, Paul said he was intrigued that his violinistic ideas were so similar to Margaret's cellistic ideas, even though they had never met or talked. He invited Margaret to write the cello portion of his method. Margaret agreed and entered what turned out to be a frustrating period of authorship, trying to fit her choice of words into the Rolland method. The photographs were difficult to get just right, and the sequence of techniques had to be exactly the same as for the violinists.

Margaret sent the proofs of the book to me in Ann Arbor where we had moved in 1969. Then came a phone call that she was going to have a cancer operation, but I wasn't to worry. Margaret wrote the preface to the Prelude to String Playing while in the hospital. I marvelled at the spirit of the woman who could concentrate on something that she loved at a time of great stress.

Paul Rolland asked Margaret to demonstrate her ideas in an American String Teachers Association Workshop in Milwaukee. Margaret again invited me to come along to assist. Actually, she did not need any assistance. She was giving me an opportunity to learn how to teach teachers. When we arrived in Milwaukee, we first took a limousine from the airport and were dropped off in front of a hotel. Our baggage sat on the lawn--suitcases, cello, music cases. A taxi showed up to take us to the university. Margaret, gregarious as ever, engaged in a lively discussion with the driver, a university graduate, about books and architecture. When we arrived at the university I had my cello, suitcase, and music, but in the heat of the discussion we had left Margaret's things on the lawn in front of the hotel. I felt utterly useless. I had come along to carry things and to help remember, and had failed at the first opportunity.

We gave four workshops in Milwaukee with Paul Rolland between 1972 and 1976 and since then have given them all over the U.S. and Europe. A workshop is basically divided into three sections. In the first we discuss the basic approach to the instrument. The second consists of a typical master class in which a student plays a work and is helped in front of the entire class. In the third we prepare several pieces to be played by the whole group in a program at the end of the workshop.

Margaret prepared for each workshop as if it were the first she has ever given. She has copious notes from all the lectures she has delivered, and she uses them. However, each lecture is different. Her preparation is similar to that of an artist giving a concert. Although he has played the pieces many times, he must reconsider all the possibilities of each work and approach the composition as if it were the first time.

Margaret's vast knowledge of music and cello playing has come from many sources, but she has integrated it with her own wonderful, characteristic insights. As Margaret guides teachers through her basic principles, one realizes that she has taught many children and has retained within herself the imagery that inspires children and adults. Her gift is the creative teaching that allows learning to happen from the inside out.

The teachers learn about bear hugs and bird wings and make their hands become "blobs." They cling to the string and bow with their baby clutches and again get the feeling of flying over the instrument with their wing feathers (fingers). They do "knuckle-knocks", thumping the cello with their knuckles to feel the easy power coming through, then clap all over the fingerboard to feel the mobility of the arm. They learn about balancing on the string like a tightrope walker and that vibrato is like the wavering of the acrobat as he maintains his balance. These concepts are illustrated with newspaper clippings of the Great Walenska walking a tight rope from building to building. Margaret brings a picture of a skeleton to show the similarities in the construction of arms and legs, and shows how the feet have their reflexes built into them but the hands work only through the brain.

She also has a "bag of tricks" which she uses to illustrate points: a lizard with flexible "fingers" and rubbery feel that demonstrates suction into the string; Chinese handcuffs, again for a suction feel; a wind-up toy, wound up in the back to demonstrate where the power is. Margaret is not teaching dry notes and rhythms, but inner feelings and concepts which will enable live tones and rhythms to be produced.

Margaret is also willing to give each person the "feel" of her baby clutch or bear hug. Using the power from her back, she has been known to fling an unsuspecting student across the room with a mere flick of her arm. She challenges a teacher to take a book out of her hand, but the teacher finds this impossible because of the strength in Margaret's flexible grip.

In the master class phase of the workshop, one realizes that Margaret's approach is not just physical, but deeply musical. She wants the music to have shape and direction. She often talks about the architecture of music—indeed that architecture is frozen music. One of her most scathing comments to a student would be, "It sounds too technical." Margaret wants Bach to sound like Bach, Beethoven like Beethoven, etc. She does not hand out "her" fingerings and bowings to works as so many teachers do. Rather, she works with each student to fit the technique to his concept of the music.

Margaret has the utmost patience when it comes to teaching. She will try multiple approaches over a long period of time in order to get a student over a musical hump. At these workshops it is clear that Margaret is not only interested in the most talented students. It makes no difference whether they are aged seven or seventy, amateur or professional, farmer or nun. The ones with problems receive the most attention. Margaret's interest is in the development of human potential.

Group playing in workshops and Cello Club is an unusual facet of Margaret's teaching. Cellists are by nature friendly, and since the cello has nearly the same range as a human choir, a cello choir has a glorious sound. Cello Clubbers love to sit down and play Bach Chorales together or arrangements of other great pieces. At a workshop many participants are moved to tears when they are in the midst of this beautiful sound. We had to limit the cello orchestra to ninety players at Margaret's 80th birthday celebration at the San Francisco Conservatory. Playing in such a group gave the whole community a feeling for the enhancement of the individual and his part in a greater whole.

Margaret and I have taught workshops in many places, each with its own special memories. We study maps on the airplane and discuss the spots we want to be sure to see. Margaret wants to experience everything. One year we were in Lexington, Kentucky. We finished the workshop and rose early on Sunday morning to watch the thoroughbred race horses go through their warmups. "Look at those delicate legs that carry the ton of flesh. They're always ready to take the weight just like our fingers in playing the cello." Then there was the Chicago trip when we had to see the wonderful lines of the Mary Cassatt paintings in the Art Institute, and Margaret's beloved water lilies by Monet.

Our trip to England, the first for both of us, was full of wonder. Under the expert guidance of my husband, Terry, we visited everywhere in London using the underground. Margaret was fascinated by the underground and kept asking whether they had dug it from the surface or had tunneled through when it was built. Neither of us knew, but Margaret was persistent. Finally, in desperation, she spotted a "typically English" little old lady with hat, gloves, and shopping basket. Margaret rushed over and asked her the burning question, "Did they go straight down or sideways to dig the underground?" The lady looked at Margaret and blurted out in a thick Yiddish accent, "I vuden't know. I hev only been here a short time meinself."

On that same trip for the European String Teachers Association, the workshop in Cambridge included a Beethoven Sonata cycle, and I performed three of the Cello Sonatas. As I was rehearsing in the concert hall Margaret stopped by to listen. She could not contain herself. "Your bowing is awful in that spot, Renie!" She grabbed my arm and vigorously demonstrated the proper approach. Other faculty members wandered in to watch the teaching demonstration. I was mortified; I was supposed to play in two hours and was being shown how to do a bowing. However, at the performance I discovered how right Margaret had been. I marveled again at the teaching genius who could not bear to see a wrong action being taken when she had the ability to correct it.

Margaret is forever lending her music, cellos, bows, and books to people and then forgetting who has what. On one occasion before a performance, she complained about the sound of my A string. I went home discouraged. What could I do? A few hours later a call came from Margaret. "There's a cello

of mine in San Jose. Pick it up and see whether it doesn't sound better." It was beautiful, and I have enjoyed it ever since.

During one of our many hours of preparation for a workshop, I left Margaret a pamphlet written by a neurologist whom I had heard speak on "Neurological Clues to Better Teaching of Music." I knew that Margaret was fascinated by the study of the mysteries of the brain and had read a great deal on the subject. I thought that this pamphlet would also interest her. I left it on top of her piano which was already covered with music, books, and magazines.

On our next trip, to Columbus, Ohio, Margaret said, "Renie, I have something that you will enjoy reading. I'll just put my name on it so you can return it to me sometime." Out came the neurological pamphlet signed Margaret Rowell. I protested, "But Margaret, I loaned that to you." We had a good laugh. "Well, it's too bad that I signed it," she said. "I'll replace your copy."

Sure enough, in a few weeks she had a copy for me. However, she had not simply written the author and asked for a reprint. She had gone out of her way to meet the gentleman and had begun an exchange of ideas with him. He was interested in her work, and she wanted to discuss his ideas with him. Her magnetism, interest, and curiosity had worked again.

Margaret has students everywhere. My students, Margaret's grandstudents, love to have her come to our Sunday morning workshops. She imparts such a feeling of history, love, and sensitivity, and does it with such a flow of energy, that we all come away inspired. From her presence one gets a sense of a pebble thrown into a pool of water with widening circles flowing out from the center. Each person she has touched knows that he has had an extraordinary experience.

Irene Sharp

January 1984
Palo Alto, California

INTRODUCTION -- Bonnie Hampton

Margaret

On the Occasion of the Conferring by the San Francisco Conservatory of Music of an Honorary Doctor of Musical Arts Degree on Margaret Rowell, May 17, 1980

It is a great pleasure to be sharing in today's celebration of Margaret Rowell's association with the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. Her roots go deep into the school's history, just as her warmth and spirit go deeply into everyone who comes into contact with her.

It is fascinating to contemplate the fact that the releasing of natural energies and talents is one of her primary concerns as a teacher. Everyone who comes within the sphere of her radiant spirit experiences that flow of energy, both outwardly and inwardly. Isn't that fundamentally centrifugal and centripetal force?

In the centrifugal sense, the warmth and generous giving of her personality has sent a flow of life out to students and cellists all over the world--many of whom are also in the sciences and literary fields. So many musicians have experienced the revitalizing effect of her interest, enthusiasm, and great love for music. She has had a Nobel prize winner among her students, and although it was not won for his cello playing, it might well be that some of the seeds of his creativity were discovered and nurtured by Margaret.

Perhaps her centripetal flow of energy is her ability to lead students to find themselves and to help them discover their own particular gifts. Although her influence on a student is enormous, her great gift as a teacher is that not of imposing a "method," but rather the liberating of students to develop their own unique potential. This is no magical solution, and I'm sure many times it is years before the seed bears fruit, but once one has had "the Margaret experience" one is never quite the same again.

It has been fascinating to watch Margaret's development over the years! She has always been energetic and full of enthusiasm, with a mind teeming with imaginative ideas. As young students, we would always wonder with anticipation what the "new" idea would be--what new concept or experience would illustrate some aspect of cello playing. It might be the concept of an octopus, with its supple strength and octopus-like suction in the finger tips--or one might try to have the agile fingers with the upward spring of someone running barefoot across a pit of red-hot stones (as Margaret had done in Mexico once, on a dare!). And of course, one's arms are really bird's wings with their perfect balance and centered energy flowing from the back. The analogies go on

endlessly, and needless to say, make for very lively lessons--one never knew what would happen next!

Her fascination with the workings of the human brain, with the discoveries of space exploration, with the enormous sources of energy and life-giving forces of the ocean, with the ebb and flow and wonders of nature--all these aspects of her personality open so many doors in one's thinking.

With this endlessly creative imagination, her development through the years has brought her more and more to the simple fundamentals--in cello playing and in life--and to the conviction that only when a person can tap into the most natural and free flowing energies can one begin to find the basic rhythm, the acute ear, and sensitive response and flow of music which is inside one.

And beyond all these wonderful conceptual ideas, one also understands that one must play well, have the ability to play anything and everything all over the cello--that's all!--but somehow, with the direction she shows us, anything seems possible.

She gives so much to all of us. I am grateful that today we may show her something of what she means to us. In closing, I would like to quote something that Margaret said in an interview years ago: "First be a human being, and then, if you insist, be a musician."

Further Musing on Margaret

She called today, having just returned from a trip east where she was with many cellists in a mutual celebration of our instument and its art. She had heard that I was not well and wondered if she could make me some chicken soup. At 83 she is still the "Mother of us all" in the most radiant sense.

As my thoughts take their course through time, I can envision, as a total piece, the many hours we spent with her in her home. The warm welcome at the door, the immediate visual stimulation one experiences, the sense of beauty. Her home is alive and interesting in every corner--books, paintings, sculptures, natural wood pieces, Galen's photos of mountains, pictures of students and visiting cellists.

The number of musicians from all over the world who have enjoyed her welcome is astonishing. One of the first cellists I met in her studio was Gabor Rejto, who had not been in this country long. Having worked with Pablo Casals he was the first direct link we had with the artist whom Margaret had made our spiritual father from the first day we played Bach. We grew up on Casals recordings and she gave us something of her special experience of

having heard him perform here in the 1920s.

We were fortunate enought to hear Casals in Berkeley in 1960 and 1962. Why did he give his first master classes in this country in Berkeley? Perhaps there are many reasons, but a principal one is because the climate, in the larger sense, was receptive. This was an environment which allowed talent to blossom and was always searching for larger ideals.

Margaret is undoubtedly a visionary. Her intuition, her searching and questioning mind leads her in her own direction, which is not always immediately clear. But when it is fulfilled, one hears from her that it is like a "dream come true."

The California Cello Club was certainly one of those dreams--the idea that many cellists and teachers could share and gain nourishment from each other. In the late 1940s Colin Hampton came to the University of California, Berkeley, as cellist of the Griller String Quartet. Having grown up with the London Cello Club, he brought the scope of international ideas which were compatible with Margaret's instincts, and this led to the forming of the Cello Club in 1950.

In the years when the Cello Club met regularly at Margaret's house there were so many visitors. Rostropovich on his first tours in this country used to practice at her home. Piatigorsky came and shared his largess and amusing stories. Zara Nelsova would come during her early tours of this area. And Bernard Greenhouse, Janos Scholz, Claus Adam, told of cello activities in the newly formed New York Cello Society.

Leonard Rose and later his cousin Frank Miller visited. Janos Starker, Andre Navarra, and Pierre Fournier were honored by Cello Club, as was Paul Tortelier more recently. Eva Heinitz, a pioneer cellist to work with the Gamba, and Juliete Alvin, a pioneer with music therapy in England brought new ideas. Laszlo Varga was welcomed when he moved to this area, as well as Robert Sayre and Michael Grebanier when they became first cellists of the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra. The list could go on and on.

But what is this magnetism which draws people to Margaret? Perhaps the answer is not all that complicated. She is a person who cares. She is an active person, who follows through on her impulses.

And, she also knows that cellists are earth people; they are not only fed by the spirit, but at the table as well! Her table was always most bountiful, whether one was a beginning student or an international artist. It's true. Cellists are mostly good cooks. Why? Because they are interested!

Margaret's answer is simple--and forever. You must give talent and spirit room and a climate in which to grow. You must deal with the real

needs of life, career, livelihood, etc., but you must keep opening up those new doors of growth and development. That is what she is doing everyday. And for the rest of us, we should just try to keep apace!

Bonnie Hampton

17 April 1984
Berkeley, California

INTRODUCTION -- Galen Rowell

Family Outings

The 1940 Chevrolet sedan rolled into the darkness, black as the night except for its headlights and bits of canvas swathed to its chassis. A fifty-pound tent hung on the rear bumper, a sack of sleeping bags straddled the running board, and a dripping desert water bag patched one side of the grille, giving the vehicle a face like a one-eyed pirate. The Chevrolet was as black as a Model T Ford, and also as devoid of accessories. It was ordered without radio, heater, or cigaret lighter by my frugal father, Edward Rowell, who sat in the back seat bundled in a greatcoat designed for a Chicago winter.

My father was always over-prepared. He had begun packing the car two days before and had tied all the paraphernalia to its flanks. We seemed to be on the verge of some cross-country journey in winter, yet we were leaving Berkeley at four in the morning during Easter Week to avoid the traffic on a half-day drive to Yosemite. The air was as warm as summer.

Margaret--my mother--did the driving. My father's eyesight had been getting worse year by year and there was talk of operations. He had just sold his 1940 Studebaker Coupe, also unequipped, for more than new price. The tires still had the little bumps that normally wear off in the first hundred miles. To conserve on tires, rationed during the war, he had glued pieces of inner tube around the circumference and stayed below fifteen miles per hour on his way to and from the University.

I was six years old and excited about Yosemite. I had already been there several times. I knew we would camp in the valley, hike some trails, see bears and deer, but even more importantly I already knew that every trip like this created a strange juxtaposition that turned the family upside down in a most pleasant fashion. My father, patriarchal and always conversant in the city, would become quiet and rarely leave the car until we arrived at our destination. My mother, absorbed in her world of music in the city, would lead me by the hand into fields of wildflowers (identifying every one), and stop at all scenic viewpoints and historical monuments. Before my father realized what was going on, we would be out of the car, free once again, experiencing a world that she knew and loved as much as her music.

My father's love of wild places was more passive. When I was ten he gave a Sunday sermon to a group of Sierra Clubbers miles from any road, emphasizing the special values that human beings have derived from time spent in mountain solitude over the ages. The source of his own inner calm became apparent as he talked about how wild places help a person clarify and purify their motives, build their moral courage, and recover their wholeness of

being. "They furnish," he concluded, "a therapeutic release which no sensitive soul can hold in scorn." He professed hatred of only one thing I can remember: snow. After leaving the Midwest, where he spent his first thirty-seven years, he vowed never to live in snow, drive in snow, or walk in snow again. He succeeded.

Snow had not been kind to my mother, either. In 1923 she took part in a mini-expedition of horses, mules, one man, and several of her "girls" (as she still calls them) along what is now the John Muir Trail. More than ten feet of snow still blanketed Donahue Pass south of Yosemite in June. Her horse, Flopsy, began to flounder badly. It panicked and tired itself so severely that it was soon, in her words, "beyond all mortal help." Last seen, Flopsy took off around a corner and kept going.

In 1951 my parents took me to the same region on a two-week Sierra Club outing. The new USGS topographical map showed a "Dead Horse Lake" at the contour level of Flopsy's last stand. I have yet to hear a better explanation for the lake's name.

Because of her mountain experience from three summers in the twenties when she traversed most of the two hundred miles of the southern Sierra, my mother was chosen by the 1951 trip leaders to go on a climb in the Minarets that involved crossing a glacier with ropes, crampons, and ice axes. She slipped once, was held, yet came back with only positive things to say about her experience. Her whole way of interpreting wild places was very different than that of my father. She looked at things more personally without a hint of his academic detachment. Years later I came upon some yellowed notes that she made on one of these outings:

> Why is the ugly in Nature so beautiful?
> Why do we notice and reverence the jagged, rocky, forbidding peaks more than the smooth symmetrical ones?
> Why do we carry in our minds the picture of the knotted, twisted tree or the dead tree hit by lightning and forego the sedate, proper trees that have grown according to pattern?
>
> The grandeur of Death in Nature!
> To see a tree that has lived and covered itself with foliage finally die, and for the first time show the Strength and Line of its limbs.
> To raise them naked and unashamed from the earth to the sky and there, silhouetted, to create for the first time Beauty as it never before has been conceived.
> Such is Death in Nature.
>
> Men seem to have forgotten the cycles of Nature.
> They expect lives to be a continual progression up, up, up to Success.
> Where is this in Nature?

> The plant, in order to bloom has to resign itself completely to its cycles--to be hidden under the winter's snow, resting uncreative with dead cold weight upon it; upon the melting of the snows to send forth green shoots; to wait until the shoots are strong, and the summer sun shines down, then to send forth its bloom, knowing full well that summer, with its time of blooming, does not last forever.

My mother's summer bloom did not last forever, either. Like a perennial flower a latent part of her came to life each time we journeyed to wild places. Since arrival at such places was always preceded by an automobile ride, I made an obvious connection. Driving a car was the key to this special kind of happiness. When we couldn't plan my fourth birthday in Yosemite itself, we did the next best thing. My mother and I picked out boulders in the Berkeley Hills to represent the Royal Arches, Half Dome, and El Capitan. On my birthday morning she told me with her usual unqualified enthusiasm, "My what a great big boy you are now! You are so big and strong you can do anything!" I had one simple request. "Can I drive the car?"

Those early family outings to the wilderness had more influence on my life than I ever could have imagined. People who only know my mother's musical background are often at a loss to figure out how I got into the auto service business, only to jump into a career as a wilderness writer and a photographer. I myself was oblivious to the links between her work and mine until recent years. When I was writing an article on bristlecone pines, she astonished me by uncovering the yellowed Sierra notes that I have quoted here. When I showed her the first draft of my first book manuscript, I listened incredulously to a critique as incisive and accurate as I would have expected from my professorial father. Her eye for continuity in language is certainly as sharp as her ear for music.

The connection between music and photography is even more striking. Ordering a performance of light for the public eye is similar to ordering a performance of sound for the public ear. It is hardly coincidence that photograhers such as Ansel Adams or Ernst Haas come from musical backgrounds. Or that Kodachrome, my favorite film, was invented by two chamber musicians in a home bathtub in Rochester, New York. Much of the Webster's definition of music fits photography perfectly: "The art and science of combining... tones...to form structurally complete and emotionally expressive compositions."

People are always surprised that I never took formal instruction in photography. Until they meet my mother.

Galen Rowell

4 March 1984
Berkeley, California

INTERVIEW HISTORY

In September 1982 the Regional Oral History Office wrote to Margaret Avery Rowell, to say:

> It gives us great pleasure to be able to invite you to be a memoirist in the Society of California Pioneers Oral History Series of The Bancroft Library. The Regional Oral History Office has over the years been documenting the cultural history of the Bay Area, but we have not had opportunities adequately even to begin a record of the musical history of the area. Your career, your position as a musical locus, your closeness to the Berkeley and University community, your very wide interests and your happy ability to tell a good story, make you an informant verging on the ideal. We would like very much to do an oral history memoir with you.

Margaret Avery Rowell was born in 1900 in Redlands, California, and was brought up there and in San Jose and in Oakland, where her father was superintendent of schools. She took her B.A. at the University of California, Berkeley, majoring in music and social economics. She is the most influential cello teacher in California. Founder of the California Cello Club, a performer from 1917 to 1937, as well as a pioneer in educational music broadcasting, an active Unitarian, humanitarian, and Sierran, she was most abundantly qualified for the Society's Oral History Series.

Margaret Rowell is admired nationally and internationally. In 1970 she was named String Teacher of the Year by the American String Teachers Association, and in 1982 she became the Grand Dame du Violoncelle in a ceremony at Indiana University's School of Music. She taught at the University of California, Berkeley, Mills College, Stanford University, San Francisco State, and the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, as well as in season after season of workshops throughout the state and the nation.

When Margaret Rowell founded, in 1954, what was originally the Berkeley Cello Club, Pablo Casals agreed to serve as the first sponsor. Margaret Rowell's influence was significant in persuading Casals to give two series of master classes in cello at the University of California, in 1960 and 1962. The work of the California Cello Club led to cellists being the most cohesive community among American musicians. The informal salon that Margaret and her husband, philosophy professor Edward Z. Rowell, ran from their Berkeley home was a place where music was often performed in the service of nature, politics, and the humanities. The Russian minister of culture was a guest there; and later, Mstislav Rostropovich, now an important member of this country's musical life, and quite probably because of that Berkeley connection.

For reasons that seem impossible to recall now, we felt that this singular personage, fully engaged in teaching and reportedly always traveling, would take some convincing as to the value of doing an oral history. But the contrary was true; she took the time and she took great pleasure from the very start in all that recollecting. It is characteristic that just as one would be thanking her for her willing participation, she would be enthusiastically declaring her gratitude and joy in being interviewed. The opportunity to share an idea and to go into the transports of the past were as fine a way to start a day as any. Casals' "benediction" on his house was to play two of Bach's Preludes and Fugues in the morning; Margaret's thoughts of family and students and beautiful places were her daily blessing.

The interviews began in September 1982 and were held weekly through November, with a session the following August and October 1983. Our date was for 9 a.m. The approach to Margaret's door is through a remarkable hedge, up a few steps, past a grassy lawn with flower beds, and on up a few more steps. And there Margaret would be, right at the door, always beautifully dressed and combed and smilingly ready. Maybe a little flustered because of an unsuccessful search for something in her papers with which to make a point, but ready to pick up the oral history thread and follow it along.

If there were parts of her past that she would rather not have talked about, or that recalled hard times, I didn't know it. The point of view for Margaret Rowell is one of continuity and growth, and acceptance of the individual, and love of the earth and the privilege of life; to develop a negative theme would have run counter to the very soul and spirit, and moreover, would have been a shocking waste of time. And the only way in which Margaret would control the direction of the oral history conversation was to declare it when something was "not important."

The interviews were held in the living room, in a corner of the room back by the fireplace, next to a window. Margaret sat on a straight-backed chair facing me, rather close, as if I were a pupil and a cello were inserted tightly between us. She was intent every minute of the interview. She was as aware as anyone I have interviewed of the delights of free-associating, and could enjoy how one pictured event moved into another, like a synchronized slide show, and how the mind made those transitions with amazing grace.

The room beyond our corner was alive with music stands, chairs, music, photo-strewn piano, books, paintings, flowers, records, busts, and heaps and piles that yielded material relevant to our conversations--when Margaret was lucky. The room was closed off with a sliding door. We slid the door back open around lunchtime, and bee-lined to the kitchen for toast and jam and cheese and coffee. That kitchen was vintage Berkeley, and to sit in the built-in breakfast nook with Margaret hopping up and down to tend to our snack was very cozy. If it had all gone on much longer I might have learned to play the cello just by breathing in that atmosphere where so many hundreds of students learned to play "from the inside out" in thousands of hours of lessons taught with so much love and appreciation by one charming woman.

The manuscript was edited in the office to incorporate material discussed out of chronological sequence. Margaret read through the rough and lengthy draft and made minor corrections. She expanded the story in some places, and provided us with brief pieces on the Unitarian Fellowship and the Cello Club. Then she turned the whole transcript over to her son Galen to read. He made no changes, but cheered us all with his enthusiasm for the sound of the memoir and the approach to the subject.

The interviewer was inspired long ago by Trevor Thomas's fine documentary piece on Margaret Rowell, taped in the late 1970s, and shown on station KQED in San Francisco. Still available is a video tape of Margaret Rowell teaching, produced by San Francisco State University. A print of that tape is in The Bancroft Library. Art Hakel, Margaret's nephew, wrote an enjoyable family history, "Margaret! Margaret! The Exclamatory World of Margaret Avery Rowell," which is also deposited in The Bancroft Library.

"Every second we live is a unique moment of the universe," said Pablo Casals, and Margaret quotes him on her 1983 Christmas greeting. She is a great quoter, and mines the newspapers and magazines and books she reads for these truths. Albert Einstein looks out at her, with quotations, from a calendar in her hall. It is fitting that her introducers, her student-colleagues Irene Sharp and Bonnie Hampton, and her son Galen Rowell, all turn around and quote Margaret, who turns a phrase with the best. Margaret's heart really beats with the universe, like the natural musician she is.

The Regional Oral History Office was established to tape record autobiographical interviews with persons prominent in recent California history. The office is under the direction of Willa K. Baum, division head, and under the administrative supervision of James D. Hart, the director of The Bancroft Library.

Suzanne B. Riess
Interviewer-Editor

9 April 1984
Regional Oral History Office
486 The Bancroft Library
University of California at Berkeley

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

(Please print or write clearly)

Your full name Mrs. Margaret Avery Rowell

Date of birth Dec. 11, 1900 Place of birth Redlands Calif

Father's full name Lewis Burtis Avery

Birthplace Stevens Point Wis.

Occupation Educator

Mother's full name Marie Louise Tolman

Birthplace Marlboro New Hampshire

Occupation Teacher before housewife

Where did you grow up ? Redlands, San Jose, Oakland Ca.

Present community Berkeley Ca

Education San Jose Normal Training School 3rd - 6 grades
Oakland 8th, Oakland Tech Hi 's. U. C. Berkeley '23, graduate stu
work in music, economics

Occupation(s) Cellist - performer from 1918 - 1937 - KGO, NBC
Arion Trio. Always taught cello. Mills College, SF. State Univ
Conservatory.

Special interests or activities Forthering interest in cello..
Formed, with Colin Hampton Calif Cello Club - still active. Always
biking, climbing, out-of doors. Race relations, working
with Oakland Negro Choir, all liberal movements of 20s + 3

I FAMILY AND EARLY INFLUENCES

[Interview 1: September 15, 1982]##

Childhood Memories

Riess: You were born in 1900?

Rowell: December 11, 1900.

Riess: Would you describe your mother and your father?

Rowell: Oh, I wish I could! As I grow older I appreciate them all the more. I think this is true of most individuals. My sister Marion and I had quite a conversation just last week about my mother. We both don't see how she ever did what she did, which was to raise five children and to have her own father, my grandfather, live with us all my young life. He retired at thirty-nine because he had asthma very badly and never worked after that. She took total care of him. Most of the time he lived upstairs. She carried the three meals a day to him, except once in a long while he came down. She waited on him hand and foot. We lived in Redlands on an acre orange orchard, with chickens, a cow, rabbits, dogs, cats and everything else under the sun.

Mother took care of all of us, and made all of our clothes until my oldest sister was able to make her clothes, by the time she went to Stanford. How my mother ever got those all made I do not know. I remember after we moved to San Jose, after I was probably in about the sixth grade, her buying my sister and myself--we always wore our dresses alike--two little, very cheap gingham

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##This symbol indicates that a tape or a segment of a tape has begun or ended. For a guide to the tapes see page 318.

Rowell: dresses, because they were on sale. Not half as good as anything she made. Those were the only made dresses I remember wearing until I was through high school.

She made all my evening dresses through college, completely, that I played in [with the trio] while the other people were buying theirs. She designed them, too. She would cut them out of sheets to try the designs on us first, to be sure that they were just exactly right. We would pick out what we wanted, usually. She did the same thing with hats. I would take her over to Livingston's or Magnin's, pick out just the hat I wanted which, even at that day, was a fortune. She would sit down and make me a beautiful, beautiful hat. I might even have some of those up in the attic! I did save one or two of them. They were really works of art.

Riess: When she was in college, was she training to be a teacher?

Rowell: Yes, and she did a great deal of literary work, and was evidently a fine speaker. At her Tabor College commencement the newspaper report was that "it was generally conceded that the palm was borne off by Marie Tolman"--that was her maiden name--"of Red Oak." She also, in another newspaper clipping, had the highest scholastic average in the school."

Riess: Your father took care of the orchard?

Rowell: Yes. Oh, he milked the cows; he did a great deal. Of course my brother, as soon as he was old enough to do anything, helped. I can remember delivering milk. I'm sure we never charged anything for it. I remember our taking it to the different neighbors, in the evening, and his swinging that bucket clear over his head, which I didn't think people could do, without spilling a drop. He used to tell me all about the stars and the constellations as we would walk. I've never forgotten it. That would be before I was six years old, so it's a very vivid memory to me.

Riess: What a marvelous place to be raised, an orange orchard.

Rowell: Yes! I loved it! The first place we lived, in Redlands, before we moved when I was five, was only about an acre of oranges. But an acre of oranges produces a great lot. And there we grew everything else beside.

In our one block there there were twenty-four children under twelve years of age. They all met at our great big barn with all the hay and everything else in it, every day, and played and played in it and in our yard. So, we were the center of it all. And I was the youngest of all of them. My best friend was the boy across

Rowell: the street. I have a picture of him at about four years old, when he got his curls cut off. I didn't recognize him after that. It was amazing how they dressed the boys in those long, long girl's dresses, and then gradually turned them into boys.

I remember so well our sitting in that orange orchard by the hour planning how many children we would have when we got married and all about it, planning our wedding with orange blossoms, and so on, every detail of our wedding. And I've forgotten whether I had a girl doll or a boy doll. Whichever it was my oldest sister, Louise--who was very good to me--let us have a wedding. She made peanut brittle for it, I remember, and she fixed up everything with a whole bower of flowers. We married our bride off to the groom and had a wonderful wedding. That was all before I was five years old.

Louise was my oldest sister, and she really took care of me, because my mother had the five children. I can remember as soon as they were old enough to go to school the four of us used to form a circle in the morning, and everybody did everybody else's hair, except for me; Louise, my oldest sister, did mine, then Marion helped her, and so on down.

Riess: So it goes Louise, Marion--.

Rowell: Louise, my brother Harold, and Marion, and then Priscilla and then myself.

My mother always said that Louise could be crying but if the doorbell rang she had the most wonderful smile and would go to the door and be absolutely beautiful from then on. She was always the society one of the family, just grew up being always very beautiful and very charming and very lovely. She was wonderful to me! If anybody read to me, it was Louise. I remember her making drawings and putting them over my bed, and such things. I have wonderful memories of her.

Riess: I hadn't realized that you were the baby in the family. That can be a desirable position to be in.

Rowell: Oh yes, it really was! I was told at quite an early age that I was an unexpected baby. [laughter] I've always carried that around with me, but instead of feeling not wanted I really felt that I was very much wanted and loved.

I think my father always meant a very, very great deal to me. Both of them did, but my mother didn't have time to spend with me because, from the age of nine on, my sister Priscilla needed her.

Rowell: Priscilla and I--we were always like twins together, we dressed alike and went to school together. Priscilla was a year and a half older than myself. She really and truly had all the brains. They may have left me a little bit of some music or something inside of me, but from the time she was born she seemed to just have not only a scientific interest but a great love of literature. She knew just what was going on in the world every single moment. I didn't, I was very happy just to be! [laughter]

She knew the answers to everything, and we always sat in a double seat at school. So, if there were any questions I asked her for the answer, and she gave it to me. As a result, I didn't have to learn anything. She read all the magazines. We took [National] Geographic from the very first issue on. My aunt in Montana was so fond of it that she sent us the first issue and always subscribed for us. Priscilla knew every Geographic by heart; she knew what was happening in all parts of the world.

My folks kept Priscilla behind and didn't let her start school until she was eight years old, so that I would be six and a half and we could go to school together. I rather presume this was because there seemed to be a slight rivalry between my older sister and brother. They had almost the same difference and there seemed always to have been a rivalry there to catch up of which I was absolutely unaware. My brother finally caught up with my sister and that was a great blow to her. I think that they just thought that we were together all the time and that we should go to school together. So we did go, hand-in-hand. We walked to school together, walked home for lunch, walked back again and walked home.

In the fourth grade one day a dog bit her on the way home, at lunch. My mother took her to the doctor, and I had to go back to school by myself. I did not know what to do! I sat in that desk and the teacher said, "Where is Priscilla?" I simply could not answer. I could not say one word. Nothing came out of my throat. She kept asking and I finally got out of my seat and ran up to her desk and whispered in her ear, "A dog bit her," and ran back to my seat. That was all I could do.

That doesn't mean that I didn't play a lot and have an awfully good time. In about the fifth grade--I don't know where it was--they did separate us for something. We went to a Normal Training School in San Jose where we had a different teacher for about every fifteen minutes of the day. I enjoyed it tremendously. I never went to a school where I had the same teacher all the way through the day; I've never experienced that in my lifetime. I enjoyed this very, very much. Priscilla was put in the advanced group, whereas I was not. [laughter] Yet I did not feel that so terribly.

Right: Margaret Avery and her older sister Priscilla, ca. 1904.

Below left: Lewis B. Avery, ca. 1930. *Photograph by Hartsook.*

Below right: Marie Tolman Avery, ca. 1930. *Photograph by Boye.*

Singing Within

Rowell: As I look back on it, one of the--what should I call it? I guess I'll call it a great blow in my life, because we always did everything exactly together. We went to Sunday School together, we went downtown together, we played with the same people after school. But, there was a tryout for an operetta at school. They chose her and they didn't choose me, and from that day to this I have never, never opened my mouth to sing. For the "Star Spangled Banner" I always move my lips, but I never sing. I would stand up with my cello and play the "Star Spangled Banner" standing up, which I've never seen a cellist do in this day and age. But that event ended my singing, there and then.

I don't think we know how many times this does happen. Anybody can be taught to sing, of course, but to never open your mouth or try to sing is something quite different. So, I think from then on I always heard music internally, and that's the only way I hear it today. I would have a heck of a time doing otherwise. But if you have heard it internally, you know it. The things I really learn by heart I hear in my inner ear and not in my outer ear.

Riess: Do you have a sense that at any time you could open your mouth and really let loose, if you wanted to?

Rowell: I don't know. I have no idea because I never tried.

Riess: Up until that time, had you been one who would go around singing?

Rowell: No. I don't believe so. There wasn't a lot of singing in our house. I don't know why. My father adored music. He just loved music! He taught music at Onawa. And I found out later that while at the college he went to, he brought different fine musicians there for concerts, Ole Bull, and others of that particular time. He was very fond of violin music.

Riess: Did he have a violin?

Rowell: No, there was no instrument in my family except, of course, we always had a piano.

Years and years later, in fact not too many years ago, was the first time I'd ever been back to the house I was born in, in Redlands. It's the only time that we were all together, my sister Louise, my brother Harold, Marion and myself. Priscilla had already died. We went back to Redlands, just for a visit. I wanted to see the house I was born in and we saw that, and the

Rowell: same orchard beside it. I wanted to go up and ring the door bell, and they said, "Oh, no. It's a Sunday afternoon. We can't!" I said, "I'm going to!"

I was never one to--what should I say? I've always hung back from doing things. But I said, "Oh, I'm going up and ring the doorbell." I did and I announced to the people that I was born in that house. They said, "Do you want to come in?" I said, "Yes."

So we stepped into the living room and it was just as I'd remembered it when I'd moved away at five years old, or five and a half. The first thing I said was, "That's exactly where the piano was!" That amazed me, because I'd never once thought of myself as musical in the least at that time. But there it was, and the other things I could see exactly as they were. It was loads of fun!

Right-Left Orientation

Rowell: I never have been able to tell my right side from my left side, even to this day. It's one of the hardest things for me. I find other people--very few people--but there are people like that. I learned my right from my left very hard, but I learned it in that house by tying my shoes, and knowing which was my right foot and which was my left, and to this day, I turn just exactly the way I was in that kitchen and get my right foot and my left if I'm having any trouble. If I'm driving or anything else I imagine that particular place and I see my right foot and my left foot, because I was trained so hard to know which was my right and which was my left, right then and there.

Riess: Why wouldn't your bow hand automatically be your right? Why wouldn't you think in those terms?

Rowell: Because of the fact that I had done so much teaching. I taught from the time I was in college, which would be the last sixty years or more. When I'm facing a student and teaching them, I'm more mixed up than ever because my left hand faces their right hand, and visa versa. Let me show you! So I find that teaching in front of a class or something like that, teaching anything physical using the arms, gets very confused with arms, their right and their left. As you can see, you'd be going like that and I'd be going like this. [gestures] It doesn't help it any.

Riess: Did you consider the fact that you couldn't sing, or wouldn't sing, to be a handicap?

Rowell: No, I never did. I never let it enter into me. I've never thought of it at all.

Riess: I'd like to follow this idea that your older sister was seen as the social one, the charming hostess. Your brother, how was he viewed in the family?

Rowell: He had a lovely disposition his whole life, yet he was very quiet and very studious. He had a very fine brain. He could do everything, mechanical and otherwise. I remember him, I could almost say, with great tenderness. With the four of us girls and a big yard to play in, we had our great big doll houses set at different places in the backyard under pepper trees. He conceived of building a sort of a train. It was out of shoeboxes, but it ran by strings so that it connected each one of our houses. We would put our dolls in that and he would convey it so that it was carried over to the next person's house, and then the next person's house and so on. He was very ingenious with everything he did and, of course, scared the life out of us by climbing up these pepper trees and climbing from one pepper tree to the other on the little tiny branches, going all the way around and coming down, which we loved to watch him do. He had that adventurous spirit in him.

Father, Adventurer and Educator

Riess: You had said that your father had a great travel streak.

Rowell: That's right. I think that my father was really frustrated, though he never showed it in any way. He was so proud of his family and he loved his family. Everything he ever did was for his family, from the very day of his marriage on through to his death. I was unaware of this except that I can see, looking back, that everything related to his wanting to get out and see this world of ours. I did not know at that time that he spent his summer vacations when he was going to college surveying the boundary between Canada and North Dakota for the Geological Survey. There was no boundary at that time. It was before North Dakota was a state that he did that, or as it was being brought into the Union. I didn't learn that until I was an adult. He was in a covered wagon doing that, and probably lots of other things.

Rowell: He also had a mind for minerals and rocks, and all the out-of-doors. I can remember our first trip to Yosemite, his stopping our old open car very suddenly and jumping out of it and running to the middle of the field to examine the rocks that were out there. My son, knowing the Harvard geology book by heart when he was twelve, and spending his whole life doing rocks, took after his grandfather without ever knowing it. My father was very interested in all mineralogy, and all that type, but particularly in all of nature and the out-of-doors as it came. He loved to teach it even when he was superintendent.

Whereas he did not have a salary worth very much to raise a family of five, he did get a car as early as almost anyone, I would say probably about 1904 or 1905. He had a two-cylinder Maxwell. My mother would put on one of these great big hats and tie it with a great big veil underneath, and they would go off on these trips, the two of them, just small trips up the mountainside there, in Redlands, where I was never taken.

But then came the 1906 earthquake. I can remember that morning so well because my father called us immediately to his bed and said there'd been a great big earthquake in San Francisco. It had stopped the clock in San Bernardino, California, only a few miles from Redlands if you can imagine that.

He immediately called an assembly at the high school that morning and told them that they were sending a train that night to San Francisco. The whole family went down to see the trains go out loaded with steaming hot bread, and clothes, and everything else everybody was sending.

Of course, that was a great disaster, but I think my father naturally viewed all of those things not only from the side of a tragedy and a disaster, but also from the geological viewpoint, being so fascinated by it. So the very next year, 1907, he and my mother left all of us with my older sister, and they took a trip from Redlands to San Francisco in the little Maxwell, which was really a trip in those days.

Almost no one had cars then. The roads were not through to San Francisco in any way; it was horses and buggies. I wish I had their journal of that trip somewhere. I would give anything to lay my hands on it. I know there must be one. They went by stages. I think they got not as far as Santa Barbara the first day. Then each one of those stops along the way on, of course, dirt roads. There was nothing known as pavement. The roads were totally unfinished. Over these high grades he would have to back the car up in order to get it up over because reverse gear was

Rowell: stronger than any other gear. They would stop at farm houses to get certain things. There were sometimes little tiny inns, way on the top of a pass, to stay overnight.

When they came to the San Joaquin River there was no bridge across at all. I've heard other people telling of their parents like this. They had to buy chicken wire and put it down so many yards in front of them to get over the sand. It was summertime, so they could get across, but you had to go very, very slowly not to sink in.

Riess: Why didn't they go by train?

Rowell: Because my father adored the thing of going in an automobile! I might say, though, I really am way ahead of myself. The summer before I was born, he and another fellow took their bicycles from Redlands, California, which is sixty miles southeast of Los Angeles, and rode from there on their bicycles to Stanford for summer school, and back. That was really quite a trip. So, he had already made that trip on bicycle. Taking it by car was quite a step forward. In later years he loved to show us ranch houses where he stopped to get a drink of milk or something.

He came to Stanford and studied that summer, and expected to come back. David Starr Jordan, who was then president at Stanford, was very happy because my father, evidently, had a scientific mind, and he said, "If you'll just come back and work for your doctor's degree, I'll take you on as a professor the minute you finish." But he had me in December and, being the fifth child, I finished that off for him. [laughter] There was no means whatsoever to ever do any of it. He never was able to do anything else with it. I know he always regretted that.

We bought a lot in Carmel just next to David Starr Jordan's. It would have been worth a fortune, but he had to give it up a few years later just for taxes; he couldn't keep up any payments on it. When I see what that frontage now sells for! His desires were ahead of his means, and he had a way of not bothering about it at all; he just didn't worry too much. He still lent money to his relatives who were in harder times than he. He felt the desire to do that. So I was brought up thinking that every penny counted and you just had to save every penny and also help others. I can't, to this day, see anybody wasting a nickel or a dime. I've never bought a Coke or any soft drink in my life, anyplace, because I consider it a waste of money. I go and take a drink out of a faucet, as I was taught to.

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Riess: I was trying to characterize the members of your family, and in talking about your brother we ended up talking about your father.

Rowell: I think I would like to talk about my father some more, if you don't mind, because I do feel that he had a terrific influence on me, and one that I did not realize. I think this is what's really great. I feel his influence came a great deal from his absolute devotion to John Dewey as an educator.

John Dewey believed that you didn't educate by teaching subjects; you waited until the desire was there to learn a subject and then you just simply went after it. I don't know whether I agree with that entirely. It most certainly is not the way Mr. Suzuki starts every child [on the violin] at two or three and has them just going right on with it. It's quite the opposite of that, in a way. And yet there is something to be said about that wonderful desire to learn and then piling yourself full of it.

That was more or less my father. I think always he was in the background, which I did not realize. He never imposed anything on us. I never knew he was even thinking about what I was doing; I thought he was unconscious of what I was doing. But he was always keeping track of all of his children and where they were, and what their interests were. We never had to take certain things, but if he found our interest, he was a little ahead of us.

My sister Marion, for instance, very early showed a great liking for games and for the out-of-doors. While she was still in high school, or at least college, she was working on playgrounds. He saw her interest there, and she went to the University of California and majored in both zoology and physical education. But the physical education is what she finally went on with, and became in charge of it for all of the girls of the Oakland schools, and was in charge of the University of California's practice teaching at University High School at the same time. So, she really had herself a career, and is benefitting from it a great deal in her retirement.

My sister Priscilla always had a scientific bent, always reading, always doing all of those things. I expected her to go into the scientific part of it while I was the one who, as I told you the other day, loved flowers and was doing everything about flowers. Peculiarly enough, she's the one who majored in botany, and genetics. That combined her love of flowers with her great scientific bent, and she did a great deal of work along those lines.

Riess: There were no signs that your field was music?

Rowell: Well, I guess not. I think that I was, more so than any of the other children in the family, left completely to my own in my bringing up. My older sister, of course, had all the attention, as the oldest one always does. My brother, Harold, developed so much mathematically and every other way very young.

Priscilla Avery, Sister

Rowell: I haven't mentioned enough about Priscilla. I think she was about nine years old when she first began getting very, very thin. But it was either when she was nine or ten that we discovered that she had diabetes, which at that time no cure was known for. Children just never lived on with it. So my mother practically devoted her life to Priscilla.

I can remember the Parent Teacher's Association which was young and very important. They made everything out of it. I can remember the women coming, hour after hour, day after day, trying to get my mother to be the state president of it. She'd already done this and that and the other thing--she was their secretary--but they had to have her. She absolutely declined, and this was solely because of my sister Priscilla, because she felt the need to give her so much attention.

She needed it. She couldn't eat anything, finally, except spinach that had been "thrice boiled." It meant a great big kettle of water with a little bit of spinach in it, and you'd throw off the water, and then do it again, and then do it again until it was really dark brown in color and horrible looking. She couldn't touch any bread; she couldn't touch anything of course with any sugar in it. It was practically that that she lived on. I think she could have some meat.

She used to love to make all of the family cakes, because she was so good at it, but she never touched a crumb. She had her scales right at her place at table and by the time she was eleven years old about she was measuring out her own food, every meal, every time. Here I was, sister, going to school with her. I paid no attention to that whatsoever! I was hardly aware of what was happening, that she couldn't have all the things I had, because she just took care of herself.

Riess: But she somehow survived all of that?

Rowell: They say now that it was really a miracle. I find my sister at age eighty-six, who supposedly has hyperglycemia, taking sweets here and there. I say, "Marion, that isn't good for you." I'm not going to use the word "cheats," but she still gets just a little bit. But not Priscilla. She watched out for herself carefully, without calling attention to it. She never touched a crumb of cake or bread in her life.

Riess: Your parents consulted doctors. Did they go on in search of healers? Would they have been interested in that sort of thing?

Rowell: No, I don't think in healers. That whole era hadn't come in at all. I think our whole faith was in the doctors. The doctors were so wonderful to her. I think they were wonderful to my mother, too. Ray Lyman Wilbur, who afterwards became the president of Stanford--in fact, I think he followed David Starr Jordan--was her personal doctor at Stanford Hospital. He watched after her, really. Even when we were in San Jose she would come up and go to the hospital for maybe a month at a time, maybe two months at a time, and he just watched out for her so completely.

I remember her getting through high school. I don't know whether she finally really graduated, but she had such a brilliant mind that she went to UC. I think it was seventy-six pounds she got down to. She was taller than I am and just nothing but skin and bones. She looked like a walking skeleton. I almost hated to see her walk in to a concert of mine because her face looked like a skeleton and it really hurt me to look at her. Some place I have a picture of her that my sister Louise took, saying, "I'm sure this will be the last picture we'll ever have of Priscilla."

Well, one day [in 1921] I was going down town with my mother. The mail came and she began opening her letters, right then. She sat down on a garbage can lid--I'll never forget it--and started weeping. I couldn't imagine what had happened. It was a letter from Ray Lyman Wilbur saying to her that insulin had been discovered and that he thought that Priscilla should be the first one from anywhere here to go east and get her first treatments of it.

She went immediately to the institute in Morristown, New Jersey. She'd been there many times before, for the treatments of the two famous doctors, Dr. James Sherrill and Dr. LeClerq. One time when she was there I can remember being at the dinner table at night and they called us from the institute and said, "We're sorry, but we cannot get one drop of blood out of her body, anywhere, so you can expect the worst." She went around without that blood in her system. I don't know how anybody does it.

Rowell: When she came back after insulin was discovered she got off the train and [laughing] nobody recognized her. She weighed 130 pounds and it was a fleshy 130 pounds. She was a roly-poly! It was all fresh fat within two months. She went back on to campus and she would come home at night, furious, "People don't speak to me!" They just did not recognize her as the same person. Really, her best friends did not recognize her.

From that time on she was just beautiful. Before that time she had looked much, much older than I; now she looked younger! The whole rest of her life everybody thought she was younger than I was. When she died the papers had me as her older sister. I said to someone, "You know, she was older." "Oh, no she wasn't." They wouldn't accept it because I looked older than she did.

When the American Medical Association met in San Francisco, Dr. Ray Lyman Wilbur said, "I wonder, Priscilla, if you would mind sitting on the stage. I want to introduce you as the only living record we have of anybody who survived since childhood through without insulin." It seems that the earlier you get it, the more serious it is. She really was a very remarkable person, and when she was so skinny she went to the university and she always got absolutely straight As.

Albert Palmer, and Plymouth Congregational Church

Rowell: We moved from San Jose to Oakland when I was twelve years old.

Riess: Why was that?

Rowell: My father had been the principal of the San Jose High School. It was a lovely high school. We went to the Normal Training School there. As I remember, there was a great big bond issue that he wanted so much for the high school. He wanted more science, he wanted to build a new wing on and do so many things, and when the bond issue failed, he was just crestfallen, and he applied elsewhere. Both Sacramento and Oakland wanted him. He chose Oakland because a minister whom he had known as a very young person coming out to Redlands for one summer from the Yale Divinity School, Albert W. Palmer--a marvelous young man--impressed him so much that he wanted to be near his church.

He chose Oakland for that and he bought us a house within two blocks of that church. We were all brought up in it. I took my sister there last Sunday. It was the Plymouth Congregational Church. It isn't in a beautiful location now at all, but it was then, just about what is now MacArthur Boulevard and Piedmont Avenue.

Rowell: My father always bought a house with a stream somewhere. When I went by it this last week I walked across the same little old bridge. The creek is there and the bridge is there. It was a lovely home, a well-built home. I think it had five bedrooms and big porches on each side. We could put down at least fifteen sleeping bags on the porch.

But the main reason there was to be near Albert W. Palmer, who was one of the most influential [persons] in my life, most certainly I can say that. I don't think I ever had a man who had as much influence. I started reading one of his books within the last six months and I thought, "My sakes! I can see why I fell for this man." Clear way back in that era of 1912 and '13, he was so broad-minded. Now, I don't know what your religious background is at all, if any.

Riess: I was brought up as a Christian Scientist.

Rowell: Well, he had the broadest viewpoint of humanity of any man I have ever known, in a religious capacity. How he at that time could preach not that all of the people should be saved on all of the Pacific islands, and so on, from their ways of living, but that everybody should have a better life and a richer inner life, was his whole thing, and not to try to reform people. He was really remarkable.

He made such an impression on me, and I guess my father knew he would, and I was the youngest but I saw to it, of my own accord, that I went to church five times on Sunday. Sunday school and church, Intermediate Christian Endeavor and then Senior Christian Endeavor I snuck in on--I was always large for my age, very large, I was aware of it--and the Vesper services in the evening. I couldn't get by without all of those.

I really just loved this minister. We were very fond of his family. His youngest daughter was named Margaret. She would come down and play with me very often and I thought she was wonderful. She turned out to be a very beautiful dancer. I don't know whether it was Martha Graham or before Martha Graham's time. She introduced, of all things, that mode of beautiful modern dance into the church service. Can you imagine it! It was really remarkable. Not into ours--that was in the Midwest by then. But, it was a lovely family, and a great influence on young people.

The Oakland church, of all things, he wanted built without a steeple. He thought it should be right in the middle of the community, that its most important thing was its gymnasium which would be open every day. He had an assistant from the University

Rowell: of California come down. That was in 1913 and '14 that we moved there, and the Plymouth Athletic Club of that era still gets together. Only about four or five of them are left now, alive, and they get together every year and celebrate. Isn't that remarkable?

It made such a profound impression. Last Sunday when I took my sister down, I didn't go to the church service. I took a book with me. I can't take it all. [laughter] I took a book and went out in the Oakland Rose Garden and read a perfectly beautiful book to myself for that solid hour, absolutely alone. That was a better service to me than any dogma I could get, and still is.

Riess: When your father wanted that for his family, was it the philosophy of this man, or was it the Christian dogma?

Rowell: It wasn't Christian dogma. I might even just slip this book to you, if I didn't give it to my sister to take back with her. It goes very quickly about his viewpoints.

He was interested in people like the South Sea Islanders. He went from here to Hawaii--they called him--and he build the great big interdenominational church in Hawaii because he felt that was a melting pot of the world. Clear back then I can remember this thing which, of course, got into the grain--I was ready for it--of the races. Discrimination has always hit me so hard. To him there was no discrimination of peoples. At the Union Church, whatever it is, in Hawaii--I think it still stands--they were just so fond of him there. Interdenominational. Never any denomination with him.

While he was in Oakland I can remember his preaching sermons--you can hardly believe this now--every Sunday on, "If I were mayor of Oakland," or "If I were editor of the Oakland Tribune," or "If I were police chief," and so on. That was the day of ferryboats and the trains connecting the ferryboats from San Francisco. (Those were really days of transportation because you knew what time you were going to get some place and you didn't have to worry about it.) They would have about five to seven long cars on the Key Route system; each car held pretty close to a hundred people. They would have that on the Piedmont line and bring it across Sunday afternoon for the evening service--the Vesper service. The cars would line up at the end of the line, wait until the service was over and take the people back to San Francisco. Can you imagine that! It was the biggest church in Oakland and it was absolutely packed for those services.

Rowell: He would get up there and say, for instance, "If I were editor of the paper I would do thus and so." The editor of the Tribune was there and he said, "Mr. Palmer, I want you to edit the paper for me. I will give you one night." He did it. That paper I think you will find in the UC library. I know that people everyplace kept that. I found it in the Carmel Library years later under a special classification, that Albert W. Palmer edition of that paper. It was the first edition that didn't have these great big huge headlines which he objected to. But he had gotten all the news of terrific interest on every subject in that paper. How he ever did it I don't know.

He had that whole town. Everybody came and listened to him. He was that kind of a person. A very unassuming person, a very gentle person. And happened to have a very beautiful face. The impression he made on me was a very, very fine one.

I remember only once in my life a rebuff. It hurt me clear down inside. As I told you, I was very unsure of myself and I never projected myself anyplace. My sister Priscilla could do anything anyplace and she always could take charge of things. I never did. But I always went to our little Intermediate Christian Endeavor--I was president of it time after time, I don't know why but I just was--and I remember about the third or fourth time I was elected president I thought that I shouldn't have been, probably. I remember Albert W. Palmer coming in, and I said, "Oh, I've just been elected; I don't think I should have been." He said, "You shouldn't have run if you didn't want to be." I thought, "Oh, my God!" [laughter] He said it very kindly, but he meant it. That's always stayed by me. "I shouldn't have run if I didn't want it."

Riess: That's right; it is a great truth.

Rowell: There's great truth there. I thought he would say, "Oh, how wonderful that they wanted you." But no. How definite, and how lovely. That's always stayed with me. Do you understand?

Riess: Yes.

Rowell: I never wanted to recite at school; I couldn't. But at Christian Endeavor I could.

Riess: What was Christian Endeavor?

Rowell: It's a group of young people. They get together on a Sunday afternoon and hold their service, hymns and prayers, and somebody talks to you or you talk to them and have discussions.

Riess: Did Albert Palmer come and talk to that group?

Rowell: Yes. Maybe once in a while. He didn't have to be there.

Riess: So, now we have your father connecting with John Dewey and with Albert Palmer. Who were some of your father's other heroes that became your heroes also? Was there anyone else?

Rowell: Oh, there would be. Of course, he read a great deal. Henry and William James, I would say so. The interests of the world were always his. He always had a great big, huge dictionary with the dictionary stand right by his place at the table, so if there was ever a doubt about anything, he had that dictionary right there and opened it up and read us the dictionary. I thought it was terrible, but I do the same thing. I have the dictionary right beside me now. The encyclopedia was always a great part of the family. He kept on with his great interest in all reading all his life.

And he had a love of science, and taught physics and chemistry, and even wrote a chemistry book.

The 1916 Yosemite Family Trip

Riess: You described your first trip to Yosemite. It was after Louise's wedding?

Rowell: Yes. We were all dead tired after this huge, great big church wedding. I think I'll just mention a thing about the wedding. My older sister Louise had planned it. She made my sister Marion's maid-of-honor dress; she made dresses for Priscilla and myself, who were not even in the party but had to have them made just exactly alike, of course. My mother was worn out because visitors came from all over. We rented the house next door for all of our out-of-town friends. My mother had to cook for all of us. It was a huge time. We had something at the house afterwards. The soloists came from Redlands, five hundred miles away, to sing for it.

She had something which I have never heard of before or since. This was in 1916. We'd had the 1915 exposition, and what an exposition that was! There had been a contest of all the choirs, coming from all over for it. Our Plymouth choir had won the contest. Alexander Steward was one of the outstanding musicians of the whole state of California. He was our conductor. He was very well known. My sister got him and that choir to sing the Lohengrin Bridal March for her. She marched in to the singing of

Rowell: the choir, which I've never heard at a wedding before or since. She had the church all decorated with a whole train load of Woodwardia ferns she had sent down by train from the Santa Cruz mountains.

It was really quite a wedding and it wore all the family out. My father said right afterwards, "I want all the rest of you girls to listen. I want you all to elope!" [laughter]

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Rowell: Anyway, just a couple of days after the wedding we started out, in our car, my brother Harold, my sister Marion, Priscilla and myself, and my mother and Dad, to go to Yosemite. This must have been a longing of my father's. I could see again that instinct of his to want to get out and travel. We never would stay in a hotel. We didn't have money for it, but we didn't think of it. We didn't know how to camp out at all. Nobody ever had except as, I'm sure, my father had on the way up to Stanford and in that covered wagon.

We took along things to use. We got as far as Fresno--a little bit out from it--the first night. Priscilla, who was frail, we put on what we thought was the very best thing, which was a hammock, and she didn't sleep a wink. We put my sister Marion in the back seat in the car. (We'd taken out the back seat.) She said she was curled up so that she didn't sleep. I know I must have slept outside on the ground on something. Everybody was taken care of except my mother and father, who just simply lay out on the ground with blankets over them. In the morning we found out they were the only ones who really had a good night sleep, while all the rest of us had a miserable time.

We drove up that old Wawona Road, right into Yosemite, and came in through the great big high tunnel, and saw the view of that valley. It was one of the spectacular moments of my whole life. Marion and I stood there in absolute wonder at it. We couldn't imagine there was such a place in the world. My sister Priscilla merely looked at it and said, "Why, yes. But it looks just like the Geographic pictures of it." She's the one who carried everything in her mind and knew what to expect.

We had a housekeeping tent from Curry's. Yosemite had been opened just the year before to automobiles. We were out on those trails the first thing in the morning, and late at night. Basically, Harold, Marion and I did them because by that time Priscilla had her diabetes so bad and Mother, of course, stayed with her. We all did make it to the top of Nevada Falls--Priscilla and Mother, too--and down to the bottom, and Priscilla had left her heavy coat up at the top. We just sent my brother scooting back

Rowell: after it, which to me today is quite a nice trip, up and back after dark to get her coat. But he did it and came down with it.

The Yosemite Falls trail was a long hard one but, oh, we did that. We did everything in just the few days we had there. It left such an impression on me that I have never forgotten it. It was a love I simply cannot tell you about.

Riess: Did your father discuss the geology a lot with you?

Rowell: I think we were all terribly much interested in it. Of course, nobody knew the geology of it in that day as they do now. John Muir had begun to change it, but I don't think that people realized his viewpoints in that day at all. We were very much interested in it.

The roads were simply terrible, such high dust on them and such curves and grades. I can remember my mother holding the map and everything in her lap when my father drove. When it said, "Bear to the right" she would yell at him, "Bear to the right!" One time we looked and sure enough, there was a bear! [laughter] We never got over laughing at that one. It really was true, and there were lots of bears in there.

[Reading back over this, I recall now coming home from that trip at midnight, exhausted, and running right for my cello and getting it out and playing and playing, just for myself. How I had missed it, even on the trails!]

Harold Avery, Brother, and Marriage to Betty

Rowell: That time with my brother was the only summer that I know in those few days, about five days at the most, that he wasn't working hard all summer, as he always was.

He majored in engineering at Stanford, and immediately went out after that, working for the State of California building the roads. That would be the 101 Highway. He would show us where he had mapped it out and worked on it from this point to that point.

He finally was in the part from San Luis Obispo to Santa Barbara. It was while he was there that he went back east to a Stanford reunion and met a girl there who was one of my sister's best friends, from her Tri Delt sorority. He wrote, "Well, I'm not

Rowell: coming home tomorrow; I'm taking Betty down the Potomac." Before he got home they were engaged to be married. She was the most wonderful wife that anybody could ever have.

I would say that it was one of the most remarkable marriages I've ever witnessed. He married a girl, a woman, who was as devoted to the whole world as anybody I can imagine, and to her family. Her daughter just came up to help in this very great emergency I've had these last two weeks--the death of our very great friend. I was so dizzy and so completely all in that I couldn't see how I could possibly drive to Carmel and bring my sister up, who had to come up. How she sensed it I don't know; I never called her. She called from Pasadena and insisted on driving up from Pasadena to Carmel, just to pick my sister up to bring her up here, stayed forty-five minutes, had a cup of coffee, and turned around and drove back to Pasadena. That's just the kind of a person her mother was, too.

One of the things her mother did that I thought was wonderful was on the outbreak of our Second World War, with the Japanese here, and so much anti-Japanese feeling then. Betty was the bulwark of our Plymouth Church, in charge of the women's club and everything else. She got that whole church involved in seeing that those Japanese got moved well to their new places. It was such a horror to have them move in two or three days to those horrible horse stables. It's a thing that I can never get over.

What had to happen was that those Japanese had to leave their homes, leave their furniture, leave everything behind, and just "get." I don't know when anything so tragic has ever happened to a civilized people. She saw to it that their furniture was put into storage with each family, with everything under the sun, managed it for I don't know how many families. She got that whole church group to feel with them rather than against them, and then to take charge of them.

Everything that she did was like that; you didn't know she was doing it until it was done.

The Yellowstone Family Trip

Rowell: In Yosemite that first summer, when I saw those wildflowers I couldn't get over it. That was 1916. I was in high school and, of course, I didn't drive at all. The next summer we went to Tahoe. Then I think it was 1918 or '19 that we went to Yellowstone.

Riess: Oh, please tell me about that.

Rowell: I can't forget that trip to Yellowstone. We had relatives, my mother's sister and her family, to meet in Yellowstone. Also, it was to be the National Education Association in Salt Lake City, which my father would attend. So, with these two things we set out to take the new Lincoln Highway.

But I must say first, because this should all be caught in some way, that when we got home from Yosemite [we] realized that we didn't know how to camp at all, we didn't have the right camping gear, and that we couldn't take another trip until we were really ready instead of having to do what we did, in sleeping out and then take a housekeeping cabin. So at Christmas time my father arranged for a man to come to the house and to start planning to make sleeping bags and a big tent for us. I'd never heard of a sleeping bag. Whether anybody else had at that era, I don't know, but I don't think they were generally made at all. All this camping gear, you just didn't know of it at all.

We had to have a tent made that would be big enough for the six of us. Then we had to have sleeping bags. But this all had to fit on the car with five of us in the car, taking along our food and everything. Of course, in those days cars, luckily, had running boards and running boards saved our life.

We cleared the dining room table off as soon as we could after dinner and Marion and my dad and this man would go into a session on details, getting those five sleeping bags and the tent so they would sit on one side of the car. I tell you, we had to roll those sleeping bags tight. We had to roll them and roll them until they'd fit into these little tiny bags they had to go into. If they couldn't get into the bag, we couldn't go on.

Riess: What were they stuffed with?

Rowell: I don't know. I don't have that one, but I took an old one to Carmel with me this time. I just carried it upstairs this morning. It's just absolutely going all to pieces. It's been in this house for forty-six years. How long I had it before then, I can't tell you, but I must have had it years before that. It must be sixty years old, that sleeping bag. I know that one cost about one hundred dollars, so they were expensive even then.

We had those sleeping bags, and we had the big tent. Then we had to carry all the food for my sister Priscilla. We had to stop along the desert to fix the little stove for her, and everything else which we had to carry. Because we were going to Salt Lake City for the NEA, we had to have our best clothes along. We packed them in the trunk and put it on a trunk thing that hung out behind the

Rowell: car. We had the food on the right hand side where we could get at it, and the other stuff on the other, and the five of us inside. So we were really quite burdened down.

We started out across by Lake Tahoe and camped the first night out in the rain, by the side of the road, and went on to Nevada. There we were to find the Lincoln Highway. When we got there, here were three roads in the sand. We didn't know which one was the Lincoln Highway. Nothing was marked.

We started down one road. We were supposed to go to Salt Wells next. Right away, almost, came two men--we didn't expect to meet anybody--in a little, tiny two-seater sticking up in that seat. We flagged them down and said, "Is this the way to Salt Wells?" They looked at each other, said they didn't know. So we assumed that it wasn't. My father, in great disgust, looked across and could see the other road right across the sand. It was good, heavy sand, as good as the road which was sand, too, so he started the car across that way. In no time we got to a place where there was a great big canyon, between us and the other side. It's the only time in my whole existence I can really say that I've seen my father absolutely angry, even for a moment.

Of course, he had made the mistake. When he saw that canyon there he immediately put the car into reverse and started backing up. He backed right over a hillock of sand with vines on it and the car went, plonk, right down on top of it with a bang. What was left of the car sank into the sand. He and my sister Marion started digging on one side, and I started on the other. Of course, Priscilla and Mother always stood by the side because Priscilla couldn't do anything like that.

We dug until, finally, my father wanted to see if it would go. When he got down where he could see, he jumped on the running board and that immediately sent the running board on my side right down on top of me. Then the whole family screamed. They thought that was the end of me. They started digging me out. Finally, when they could pull me out, everything was fine. My father got in to test the car and it really did go. That was one of the happiest experiences of our lives. Somehow there's nothing like going clear way down to make you go clear way up! We just sped along that highway--seemed to--that wonderful sand dirt road. We usually stopped very early. That day we went on after sunset, full moon, and finally came to a stop and laid out our sleeping bags, which we thought was just wonderful.

The rest of the night, wonderful sleep except for howling coyotes. We woke up in the morning to find out we were right in the midst of bones, bones, bones. It was some sort of animal graveyard that we were in. [laughter] So all the shouting of the wolves and coyotes and all the animals in the night was explained.

Rowell: We went sailing on, but we realized then that we were getting way too far behind and we would never make Salt Lake City if we kept going at that rate, because of the heavy trunk on the back that kept bang, bang, banging down every single rut we came to, and it was all ruts. So the first time we crossed a railroad we stopped and put the baggage for the train to take. (We didn't realize that when we got to Salt Lake City it would never be there. It didn't arrive in time for the convention. We had to wait for it. We were there almost a week so it arrived by the time we left for Yellowstone.)

After Salt Lake City we went right on up to Yellowstone where we again did the trails. I enjoyed it immensely, but never with anywhere near the enthusiasm that I have for Yosemite. It would come absolutely one hundred percent above Yellowstone. I was disappointed in the forests, in the small trees, and other things. In many ways it was more beautiful then than now; the colorings of the rocks and everything were much more beautiful then.

Margaret's Oceans, and Mountains

Riess: When you talked about Yosemite earlier you also talked about the ocean and the beach. I could see that you wanted to make sure that your beloved ocean had also been given its due.

Rowell: [laughter] You're absolutely right with that. I call myself a true schizophrenic because I am completely divided down the middle. I love the ocean with such passion I cannot tell you, and I always have. When I was small we went every summer to Ocean Park. I can still see the house we lived in there. One of these cousins from Montana had to watch out for me for the whole summer, see that I didn't get out deep in the water. We were within a block of the beach and it meant everything to me.

But that is not the ocean, to me. Carmel and Point Lobos, the rocks and the sand, are the real ocean to me. My father must have had it also, because the first thing he did after we moved to San Jose was to get us to Carmel. There we stayed in a little, funny bungalow with an outhouse, which is still there, or at least it was the last time I was down. The secretary of my father at the high school owned it. She knew that part of the country by heart, so we would go down and go under the fence to get out to Point Lobos. It was privately owned in those days. Later I came to know the people who owned it. To go through all those things with somebody who loved them as these two old teachers had, was something.

Rowell: To feel the difference of each beach--of a rock beach, of a sand beach, of the pebble beach, of the ones with the arches in them so the breakers come in through the arch. To know each beach, and then to sit there by the hour. I wanted to spend hours. I always waded out. I spent hours going out from my folks. I don't know how they let me go for forty-five minutes at a time, I'm sure, by myself, wading out through all of those tide pools.

I loved all that tide pool life. Of course, there was nothing in those days against taking anything from it. I can see now it doesn't make that much difference. I had such a selection of perfect abalone shells! I've given away two-thirds of them. I loved getting them. Of course the animal is already gone out of them; I'm not taking any life away from anything. If you can catch them before the surf takes them out and just puts them to shreds, it's wonderful. I used to have them from the size of my little fingernail to the great, huge ones.

I would admit in those first days before I knew better I picked the starfishes off and took them home and dried them. That was terrible. The smell from them is a stench that you can never forget once you know it. But, oh, how I loved all that animal life! I'm sure it didn't develop my brain very much, but I think it did develop a sense of something very inner in me.

As I said, my father always saw to it that we had a stream beside us. In Redlands we had the little stream running right through our property and had our reservoir for our orchard. In San Jose it was the Coyote Creek. We owned down to the middle of it. It was quite high-banked there. It had two leverages. It was a beautiful place to be, and the minute I got home from school I just ran down and practically threw myself out on the sand and stayed for hours.

I'd watch the little red--I don't know what they are--running around in that sand, and every kind of an animal. I was always fascinated with butterflies. I used to be able to make them sit on my hand. I've done it a few times since my marriage. I hate to say that later in my life I even caught the butterflies and preserved them. I was so interested in all forms of life. We had a wonderful dog that I just adored. I was out-of-doors the minute I got home from school, and stayed there.

The ocean does have this great drawing thing for people. When I was at the ocean, long before 1916 and Yosemite, I didn't see how people could go to the mountains. I thought the ocean was everything; it was total to me. I couldn't think of a summer without going to the ocean. In fact, I can't yet. I have to go both places. I say I'm no good until I've slept in a sleeping bag

Rowell: in the mountains before going back to school. This is the first year of my life that I have not gotten out. It broke my heart to have the invitation and not be able to go this summer. I feel this is something lacking. So, those two poles for me are still right there.

Later, when I had my studio on 23rd and Broadway in Oakland, I had two big rooms and a huge closet, and then a porch off of them. I had a grand piano in the room. That was the waiting room for my students. But on this porch, I had one side of it fixed like Yosemite, with pine cones and a wonderful picture of the lone pine on Sentinel Dome. The other side was completely fixed with starfish and abalone shells. When I got tired teaching I could just for a moment sit out there, have a drink or something, and look at my sea shells and my pine cones--the great big, long pine cones.

Riess: The inner life is what you got out of it?

Rowell: I think I got a sense of being absolutely one with nature, as if there was no position between me and nature, which is what I do feel today if I ever can get out. While I enjoy a garden very much and I love to see a garden well kept, I enjoy the out-of-doors so much more and a path that is not well kept.

Riess: And flowers that are not cultivated.

Rowell: I have to have wildflowers. That's what I was telling you the other day. To me to go out into a meadow, especially a mountain meadow, where I know nobody has trod before, and see a wildflower that nobody has seen, and know that that wildflower has come up from its own roots and has lived its own life, and is ready to die there without ever having been seen by a human being is to me something so amazing. Somehow that makes me believe in miracles. It really does. There is something so absolutely remarkable about a world that can produce that beauty without saying this has to be for something.

One of the times that I can remember now is in Yosemite, climbing up Yosemite Falls, which is a long, hard, hot trail, and then going out to Eagle Point, which is one of the Three Brothers, out there at the top. You had to find your own way out then. Then coming back, we fought our way through one meadow which had entirely blue violets, just covered with blue violets, then broke through the trees and came on another meadow. (Those meadows are no longer there; they are all filled with trees now.) This next meadow was pure white violets. To this day the sight of a white violet is to me something so beautiful. It means rare mountains because you can see blue violets often, but those white violets, they grow in just certain places.

Rowell: Then we came through on the top of El Capitan, where I'm sure there are trails now. I just loved it. I got to the part where it began going down and just slid on my tummy--not where it got down really steep--to where it was good.

Flowers, and Botanical Science##

Riess: Your father wanted you to take botany, you said?

Rowell: Yes, I heard my sister telling people last week that evidently from the time I was a child, if a person came just to stay over night or for any dinner or anything else, I would always have a fresh flower at their place at every meal. Of course, we had jasmine growing at the house. I did love flowers with a passion--there's nothing more beautiful than an orange blossom, or sweeter--and I was always aware of them. I even tried to draw them. I thought that I was going to major in botany. That just seemed like a natural thing to do.

I signed up for art in high school my freshman year. I was always drawing old barns or something like this. The family always caught me drawing. Not that I drew well, particularly, but I loved it. What happened in that was my major teacher for art put out the cubes and squares and the circles. You were supposed to make a perfect drawing of them. Well, me do that! Me neat! No. I'm not neat. I'm anything but neat. I could not get those things to look right to save my neck. I hated every minute of it. It's so sad when you hate the thing you love. I got so I'd never pick up a pencil. They could not get me to finish out that six months. It changed my whole life from that point of view. But I had to finish that out, then, my high senior year.

There is where I see almost a Dewey principle. I think my father must have spoken to that teacher for me. I had to finish it out my high senior year and that I enjoyed because she took us out and had us paint scenes, or something of the kind. I don't ever remember saving a picture I painted or being interested in it; I only know that I enjoyed it while I was doing it. But nothing ever brought back that interest in it to me.

Well, then the same thing happened to me in botany, and in the same school. I took botany and I adored my teacher, Katherine Dolbear. I thought she was made in heaven. We would go out in the fields, pick our flowers, sit under a tree and dissect them right down in their Latin families, their Latin names. It was a joy to do. I did it absolutely right and I remembered everything.

Rowell: It was not a shortcut in any way, and it wasn't compromising with learning. It was learning from experience. I never forgot the name of anything, either the common name or the Latin name, at that era. I've forgotten the Latin names now.

She was taken ill. "The next six months," they said, "you're going to have another teacher. It's a fine teacher," coming, I believe, from the University of California. Here came a man to teach us. He had a very different idea of botany; botany was looking under a microscope at cross-sections of stems, at algae and all sorts of things. We would have to turn in very careful drawings of that. I never turned in careful drawings and I hated it from the beginning. I wanted to be out. I wanted to know more about flowers.

I got even with him beautifully. I would like to tell about it because it suited me to a T. The next summer in Yosemite I would go out with the nature man every single day, no matter what. He was marvelous. Then he had to leave and they were sending in a new one. I couldn't wait, I was right there to meet the new one as he stepped off the stage. There was my botany teacher! I went along with him the first day. I think I was shocked, but not terribly surprised, that he didn't know a single wildflower by name. He very soon found out that I did know them all, so he asked me to be there beside him. Every day I was right there with him to tell him the names of all the wildflowers of Yosemite. What a joy that was, and what revenge!

My sister Priscilla was a scientist from the time she was born and interested in absolutely everything. She went on to get her Ph.D. in a combination of botany and genetics. They told me later--I did not know it--but they would have given her a professorship if only she hadn't had diabetes. But they considered the diabetes in denying it to her. Isn't that amazing? Even though she took such perfect care of herself.

She was in charge of all the experiment work at the Botanical Gardens, in nicotiana. When I went to the South Seas Dr. Goodspeed and Dr. Setchell came to my house and asked me to go see the people in New Caledonia, to tell them they had to send nicotiana back to UC. I hope they did, because I got off the ship early and went out in one of the little boats, and went to the big offices to give them the messages. [see p. 110]

An Evening with J.B.S. Haldane

Rowell: People came from all over the world to UC because it was so well known for all its work in nicotiana. Priscilla would come home and tell about all these different people being there that day. It was really quite boring, one after another. She had wonderful people from England, Sweden, from everyplace--many of them from Russia. When they were later killed, during the horrible things there, she was just broken-hearted.

One day she came home at dinner as usual. She said, "I've been going around with Professor Haldane all day today." I said, "Who?" And she said, "Haldane." And I said, "Not J.B.S.?" She said, "Yes, J.B.S. Haldane." And I said, "Oh, you can't mean that!" She said, "But of course I do! Why?" And I said, "Oh, but I've read so many of his articles. Why he's one of my heroes!" She said, "Well, come on. We'll go out to dinner with him. I'll call him up."

So she went right and called the professor with whom he was staying. They set it for Friday night. Well, I was on NBC in San Francisco at the time. I planned clear ahead. I got my dress cleaned and I bought a new artificial flower to put on my dress. I was to meet them at the Ferry Building, at the flower stand. They told me exactly what boat they were coming on. I got down there and I waited and waited.

People began coming off of that boat, and here I saw my sister coming, but someone came in front of them, a man with no hat, saggy pants, and of all things he came right up to me! Such a time to have somebody come and try to make up to me! It just seemed incredible. So, I slapped him in the face.

He laughed, put out his hand and said, "I'm Dr. Haldane." I practically collapsed. He had asked what I would wear, and where I was to meet them. You can imagine my chagrin! He, being the man he was, immediately told me the funniest story. I wish I could remember it all. It was something about his going some place and falling off his bicycle just at the wrong point.

Riess: Oh, an embarrassing story.

Rowell: Yes, a very embarrassing story. He just cleared it right up like that. I've never forgotten that. He was a most charming man. He was chiefly interested in San Francisco Chinatown. I was his partner for the evening. We went and ate at a Chinese restaurant and then went on to a Chinese theatre, where the singing was that

Rowell: funny singing. It was going to last for two days. So, after many hours of it we got up and left, I having to broadcast early the next morning. It was a wonderful evening. He was a very charming man.

Riess: I think it's interesting that he was one of your heroes, too. You really did have the catholic interests.

Rowell: I always took The Atlantic Monthly and Harper's Magazine, clear way back in those days.

Riess: We talked a lot about your father. When did he die?

Rowell: My mother died at seventy-two and my father died at eighty-four. He didn't retire from the Oakland school system until he was seventy-seven, I think. At that time he immediately went around the world with my sister, which again shows his desire for travel.

I should say that my mother's death was a terrific shock to him. I didn't realize it would be. We all knew it was coming. I was at the hospital when she died, and he was too. I couldn't have cried if I had to because she had lived such a wonderful life and I knew she was going, as he did. I felt very close to him at the time. I never saw a man be more alone than he was afterwards. He just didn't know what to do with himself.

I was broadcasting in San Francisco. They didn't even let me off. I think I was able to get over for the funeral services which, of course, I had to arrange basically. Everybody thought that I played for it, but my wonderful cello teacher, Stanislaus Bem, came over and played. Everybody to this day stops to say, "Oh, you played so beautifully for your mother's funeral." But I didn't.

The 1933 Alaska Trip, Margaret and her Father

Rowell: My father was absolutely crushed [by her death]. I was living in San Francisco and he would call me everyday. Since I didn't take any time off then--that was in March--they let me take time off in the summertime, by letting them know way ahead of time. We never had a substitute for the trio. If you couldn't take a job, we just didn't play. But we would hand it over to another trio. We never had a substitute in all those years.

Rowell: They gave me two weeks off in the summertime. I told my father and he immediately began counting on going to Alaska. Alaska in 1933 was out there, of course. You have to realize there were no airplanes that flew there. He would call me up in San Francisco every day. "Well, I've added this; we're going there." "While we're there we might just as well go down the Yukon." So it developed into a five week thing instead of a two week vacation. The girls were furious with me, but I had to do it for my father.

I finished playing at NBC in the morning, put my cello up, and as I was putting my cello up the announcer announced, "Margaret Avery is putting her cello in her bag. She's flying to Seattle, Washington and she'll be there tonight!" That seemed impossible.

There was no bridge then, so I took the ferry boat across. There was no San Francisco airport, you understand. Very few people can realize that there was only the Oakland airport. My sister met me with her car and took me out to the Oakland airport. Then we got on. It was a plane that held twelve people. It just had those little things across the bottom, and then the wings across the top. You could see out and see everything.

I remember how beautiful it was over the Sacramento Valley. This was the summertime. To see those wheat fields and the rice fields--the rice fields were all deep green, and the wheat fields were a tan. Then there were the fields getting ready to be planted, dark brown. It was one of the most beautiful sights. From that day to this I've seen that dark, earth color, and the light tan and that dark green, in all sorts of patterns--it wasn't just fields. I thought, "Oh, what a design for a dress! What beautiful cloth that would make. Why don't designers get up here in the sky and look down for their designs?"

We flew up just over the side of Mount Eddy. I thought we were going to bump into it as our plane just barely cleared the top of the trees and went on. I don't know if there was any such thing as a bathroom in the plane; I doubt it. And there was no food. We landed in a grass field in Oregon some place. They had little tents up. They served us fresh fish.

I was the only woman on board. Overhearing all the men talk about how many airplane accidents they'd been in, suddenly made me at ease. I realized, they're standing here talking about the accidents they've been in. It's like an automobile accident; you're alive afterwards. I don't have to worry. It's very different from today with an airplane accident.

Rowell: We flew on and landed. We went immediately to our ship. We never thought of flying from Seattle to Alaska. I found out later that there was a plane that could have done it, but nobody we knew had ever done it. So we took the Inland Passage.

When we got to Alaska we found that flying was absolutely nothing, or I should say everything! There were no roads in Alaska at that time whatsoever. There was nothing open between any towns. It was the healthiest place to live. Nobody ever heard of locking doors because who could escape? There were no roads out from one town to another, and in winter they were closed off except for dog sleds. You don't run a dog sled with stuff you've just taken out of somebody's house! Every little town had its own little, tiny airplane, those little one-seater things. That was the communications in 1933, whereas it wasn't in the United States at all.

We had a wonderful time going by train. We did go down the Yukon River in a "back wheeler." That really was something in those days--the real old Yukon. There were twelve people on board that old back wheel steamer. I steered it quite a bit of the way down the Yukon. The sun didn't set or rise. We were right at that time of June when we had the sun twenty-four hours a day part of the time. We were above the Arctic Circle, at Fort Yukon. We got out and saw all sorts of things. I got out with the pilot to sound the depths to see where we turned down to get to Fairbanks. At Fairbanks we went to Mount McKinley, and then took the train on down and the boat back again. It was really a very nice trip.

That got my father started, and there was nothing for the next year except going around the world. He thought I would go around the world with him, but I couldn't leave the trio. They were just furious at me for taking so long. I had been so worn out from all of it that they felt they had to give me a vacation. My teacher, Stanislaus Bem, came down and played for me all that time.

Riess: Of the daughters were you the real soul-mate, do you think?

Rowell: I don't know. I probably was closer to him than anybody else, even in his last days, even though he lived with my sister Marion all the time after my mother died. She built a house out here, in Berkeley, and he moved out here to Berkeley to be with her. But I think he always came to me. I surely loved being with him.

My father always had had within him that lust for travel. (In the book he gave my mother for their wedding in 1886 on going up the Nile, he wrote, "I hope we get to take this trip.") I think

Rowell: from then on there was nothing except going around the world for him. That was before the day of airplanes for general use. He and my sister Marion started out the next year from San Francisco, went through the Panama Canal, spent days at Guatemala going up in there getting beautiful things from there, and then going across to England, on up to the fjords of Norway, Sweden, coming down through Germany and France, meeting our very dear friends in Italy, then across to Egypt, where he finally got his Egypt in. Then around to India to Bali. He fell in love with Bali and the Balinese women. When he came back--San Francisco was the height of fashion in those days, it was supposed to be the best dressed city in the world, but he couldn't see it at all, these black suits and great big furs. He said each one of their dresses was so beautiful in Bali! He wanted to go right back to Bali.

Then they came to China--went clear into the interior of China. She brought the most beautiful things--they both did--from China. He was visiting the universities and colleges and they were wonderful to him. He knew the presidents and he knew the different people. They had a fine time in China. It was that interior where people didn't get for years and years afterwards. He came home ready to go right back again.

II MUSICAL BEGINNINGS

[Interview 2: September 21, 1982]##

First Musical Impressions, Madame Schumann-Heink

Rowell: One of the highlights of my young life was when Madame Schumann-Heink came to San Jose and sang in a huge auditorium for all the school children. I was unaware at the time of the impact that concert had on my entire life.

As I have said I was always shy, but I longed to see her face, after hearing her deep contralto voice. I was amazed when someone came and took me right up to her, and she gave me a huge bouquet of chrysanthemums to hold, and put her arm around me. I of course did not tell my family, but I had seen the photographer taking pictures, and I knew that they would be in the paper--and then I would tell my family.

I hurried to get the paper, and sure enough, the picture was on the front page--Madame Schumann-Heink and all the dignitaries. But all that you could see of me was my patent leather shoes. I had held the beautiful bouquet, which was almost as tall as myself, directly in front of me!

However, the impact of her singing, as I look back on it, was one of the most important in my whole musical life. I didn't realize until I was looking up things for this interview, that the very songs she sang were the ones I played and played on my cello. I used to play them on the radio.

This was the first indication, to me, that I was musical. My oldest brother and sister had piano lessons, and the teacher came to the house and gave them each a half hour. I don't know how I picked up the piano, because I didn't have any lessons, but I used to sit down and play their pieces. I don't know how I learned to read music or anything, but I did. Then I asked

Rowell: for music lessons, so they gave Priscilla and myself fifteen-minute lessons after the teacher finished with my brother and sister. She gave us, instead of any music, just the five-finger exercises [Czerny], and I wouldn't practice. They couldn't get me to go to that piano and practice. Priscilla practiced faithfully the time she was supposed to; I just wouldn't touch it. I gave it up completely. But I knew enough piano to accompany my brother on the clarinet. When he went to Stanford he played the clarinet all the way through.

But that thing of starting it that way, that affected my whole process of starting a person on an instrument--not to start them merely technically at first, but to give them the quality and the sound first rather than only a technical approach.

Riess: You've mentioned three clear instances of really negative teaching experiences, the art, the botany, the piano.

Rowell: Yes, and that hasn't come clear to me until I'm doing this with you, that these negative things had a great deal to do with what I would call the approach that supposedly people seem to enjoy in my cello teaching, which is to start them very musically. And the person of course who has done this so remarkably is Mr. Suzuki in Japan with the violin and Paul Rolland in the U.S. They do it slightly differently from what I do, but we have very much the same ideas.

Maybe I've given the impression that I wasn't musical, or didn't know I was musical at all. But I don't think that's really the way it was. I was always fascinated by so many things about music. My father, when he was principal of the high school in San Jose, would come all the way home in that little Maxwell of his and take me back to the high school every time there was a concert. But it was always a band concert. Sousa's band came. I didn't know what string instruments were really like, but the band I knew by heart. Evidently my father thought I was very musical, because he didn't do that to any of the other five children, even though they were taking piano lessons. He sensed that.

I could always go to the piano and read any music I wanted, though I don't think I was ever taught to read it. And I could always play their pieces. I loved to sit down and play pieces on the piano. They were classical pieces of that time, very different from Chopin "Nocturnes" and so on, which were the classical things later on.

Riess: What were the classical pieces of that era?

Rowell: Probably things that would be written in the Études Magazine or something like that, and things picked up.

[telephone interruption]

Rowell: I realized that I was enjoying music and the way of enjoying it without having to take lessons. I was really enjoying the process of playing the piano, of making music. I did at some point take a few lessons from a teacher in San Jose, Mrs. Brinker, who, evidently, thought I was enough talented that she took the trip--which was quite a trip in those days--from San Jose to Oakland to give me lessons afterwards. I almost forget about her because I was not interested in lessons, but I was interested in the music.

Riess: This is still piano?

Rowell: Still piano. I didn't ever think of doing much with it, but the minute that I got on to the cello, the very moment that I drew a bow on a cello, wow!

Introduced to the Cello, 1914

Rowell: It was my first year in high school [1914]. It was to be my fourteenth birthday. My father told me at breakfast that my present was a cello. I had no idea what a cello was, even. He came to the high school and got me out, and took me over to Oakland High, into the basement, and said that I was to have my first lesson. I saw this instrument over in a corner. I was just amazed at it. I said, "Thank goodness I don't have to blow it!" So, that was my first introduction to a cello.

Pretty soon this very tall, almost homely man came into the room, very quietly. My father introduced me to my teacher, who was Mr. Herman Trutner, Jr. He became a very great influence on my life. He gave me my first lesson right then, and the joy of pulling that bow across that string for the first time and getting the sound I got was one of the thrills of my lifetime. That's something that I've said to everybody ever since. I just want that first time that they hear the sound of a cello to be something they really love, instead of the scratch that some people think you get for the first few months. You don't. Nobody ever has to get an ugly tone out of the instrument.

So, from the very first I was enchanted with it. It wasn't that I ever thought of playing it well; I just really enjoyed it. I had a cousin who knew me as the great out-of-doors person I always

Rowell: was, spending every moment out of doors. She said, "Margaret won't stick with that for any time at all. She should have a banjo or a guitar, but not a cello." Yet I really loved it. Never was I asked to practice. I never could find time enough for it, because I was so interested in it.

Riess: Did you ever talk to your father about how he decided to do that?

Rowell: He did not choose the cello. Evidently, the minute he got to Oakland from San Jose, he went to the head of the music department. Oakland, at that time, was developing one of the best music departments in the whole country. I wish I could run into some of the stuff of that era, just to show you. If I can find it, I will.

Riess: This is all under Herman Trutner?

Rowell: No. Mr. Glen Woods was really in charge of all of the music for Oakland schools, the singing, playing and everything. Mr. Trutner was in charge, probably, of the instrumental music.

The Oakland schools were going ahead by leaps and bounds with their whole music program. They were noted for being one of the best music programs in the world, actually, not only in this country. People came to visit from all over. I have a picture of a man coming from Australia to study the music here, and eventually being the conductor of the Minneapolis Symphony, which is one of the finest symphonies in the country. He was just enchanted with what we were doing. They took a picture of some of us with him.

Riess: Does that mean that there were a lot of performers who also came to the schools?

Rowell: People came to visit a great deal, yes, not performers, musicians, like conductors and people interested in the teaching of music in the schools.

Riess: You were saying that your father didn't choose the cello.

Rowell: He didn't choose the cello. He went to, I guess, Mr. Trutner himself, the head of instrumental music, and said that he thought he would start me off on some band instrument. Now, at that time girls just didn't play the cello, but evidently Mr. Trutner said, "Why don't you start her on a cello?" And my father said, "Okay." So that's the way it happened. I think Mr. Trutner himself chose it without ever having seen me. It was just a chance, as these things so often are. I think many musicians just play by chance. Somebody in their family has played it, or something else, and they pick it up.

Rowell: I was in love with it from the very first moment that I drew that bow across the strings. I didn't practice a lot--I really didn't--but I practiced enough so that within about three months Mr. Trutner said, "I want you to come and bring your cello and play in orchestra." Very soon I was in the orchestra, which amazed me, and inside of six months I was the first cellist. It was a very musical high school. It had two full orchestras, a first and second orchestra, and he put me right in the first chair of the first orchestra.

Riess: Another name in the history of music in Oakland is Annie Florence Brown.

Rowell: Ah, yes! She was the head of culture for all of Oakland. It didn't matter what field it was in. It was Annie Florence Brown, whether it was bringing lecturers, bringing artists, whether it was tending to the city government. Whatever it was, it was Annie.

She came from a big family and they were all public minded. Matilda Brown was a sister. Judge Brown was a brother. I taught his son. There is still a Matilda Brown Home for the Aged in Oakland. Just a remarkable family.

Riess: And who was Blanche O'Neil?

Rowell: Blanche O'Neil was in charge of music for the Berkeley schools. She just died about a month ago, I think. She was a harpist. I didn't know her well, but she was a fine teacher.

I was then taking harmony. By the time I graduated I had two years of harmony, which was much better than anything I got at the University of California later, I'm sorry to say, and conducting and orchestration. We did our own orchestrating of things for the orchestra, and then we were able to conduct whatever we had arranged for orchestra ourselves. The University of California was quite a let down; we played much better music in our high school orchestra than we did in the Cal orchestra.

Riess: This sounds like an amazing time, musically.

Rowell: It was a terrific thing of music in the Oakland schools. I don't know what happened. It was basically the people they had in charge of music, though.

Mr. Trutner taught all the different instruments, but trumpet was his main instrument. He had already retired from being an Army bandmaster when he came to teach in the public schools. He taught violin and played the violin and the trumpet. I didn't

Rowell: know that he played any other instrument, but when he retired from the school department, at sixty-five, he went right over the next day to the San Francisco Symphony and was taken as a French horn player, perhaps the most difficult of all the brass instruments to play.

He was there until he retired at eighty. On the way home that day, unknown to the rest of his family, he picked up a Cadillac. He drove home to his wife and said, "Now we're going to go across the country and see the world!" Which they did.

He was a remarkable man. What he evidently had was the great love of music inside of him and the ability that very few people have, and that is the fundamental of teaching, of getting the person to hear what they want to play, and to play with good quality, good intonation, no matter what the instrument. That really is the basis of it. And he gave himself completely to what he was doing.

The Arion Trio is Formed

Rowell: In no time, it seemed to me--it was probably around two years--he took the first violinist of the orchestra, I being the first cellist, and a very fine pianist who played piano for the orchestra, and made us into a trio. He picked out the music. (I could play them to this day. They were all beautiful classical selections for trios.) We always met after achool and he gave us trio coachings. We began going all over, playing, and that was the beginning of the Arion Trio.

We were together, specifically, for eighteen years. We never played without all three of us playing. We were later coached by Louis Persinger, who was Yehudi's first teacher and the one who made him come out as a genius, and later by Naoum Blinder, who was Isaac Stern's only teacher. Those two great San Francisco teachers were really remarkable and we never played our big classical trios without good coachings from them.

He also had us in a string quartet in high school. With that we used to travel around to the different colleges. I remember going out to Mills College with Dr. Aurelia Henry Reinhardt presiding. We came out to UC, too.

Somehow music really meant a great deal. Of course, you have to remember there was no radio in that day and age. There was nothing the people could turn on and hear music. All music was

Rowell: live music, which was a very different thing. There were a few records but very few. I had not at that time ever heard a cello record. Long after I was playing cello professionally I had only heard one cello record, and that was a piece I wouldn't play today.

Riess: Were you considered then to be prodigies, the three of you?

Rowell: No. I never gave that any thought at all. We were in great demand because there was nothing of our kind, nothing that could fit that thing of calling up and saying, "Will the trio come to here or there."

Playing for the Soldiers, World War I

Rowell: I think that the thing that probably made us a group quicker than anything else was that you would have, ordinarily, to wait for professional engagements to come to you but when the war came along, in 1917 and 1918, when I was in high school, at that time the YMCA was given the complete jurisdiction of all entertainment and concerts for the Army, both in this country and in Europe. The General Secretary of the YMCA came immediately to us and engaged us for concerts for the soldiers. I think it was going and giving the hundreds of concerts that we did give for the soldiers, while we were still in high school, that gave us a solidity. We had to get together and practice every day, no matter whether we were going to school or not.

Riess: Where were the Army concerts given?

Rowell: The San Francisco Bay was really a center of everything. I wish I could get in an automobile and take you to some of the places we went to. There were forts all over everyplace. Fort Cronkite, Fort Mason. I can't tell you where they all were. Sometimes we would take a boat and be met; sometime we would just go by car, if it were Fort Mason or something like that. We would never know. We would just know that we were going to play a concert that night. I can remember taking the boat across to Sausalito and going to forts over on the other side. A number of times we had to take a boat across to Goat Island, and give concerts there. There were many sailors there. Of course, there was no Treasure Island then. Treasure Island was built in 1939 for that exposition, so it was just called Goat Island in that day. (Yerba Buena was its real name.)

Riess: These were soldiers who were about to be shipped out?

Rowell: Yes, probably. Also, the whole fleet came into the bay. During the last year of the war the whole fleet lay in the San Francisco Bay. It was a beautiful sight. I can't tell you how many of those great big battle ships. We would have to go there.

Now, we never went anyplace to play, from the very beginning all through this time while I was even in college in 1918, without a chaperone. Usually it would be one of our mothers that would be sitting there on the side, taking us. So we hardly spoke to the soldiers afterwards, even though they would come up. We were always very well chaperoned.

My mother didn't particularly like going out in a small boat. We'd go out in very small boats to those big battleships, climb up the ladders and go down and play for them, carrying that cello. It was really quite something. Sometimes my cello case got wet. I only had a soft case in those days, so it would get wet being splashed while going from one small boat to another. In the hold there would always be a piano, and we would play.

I think that gave me something that I would never have had otherwise. I was always an extremely shy person. While I loved the cello I did not enjoy performing in front of people. But playing in front of a bunch of soldiers whom you knew were going right overseas, or else had been seeing service, and having them enjoy you, was a good experience.

It was a very good thing for our trio. Many trios played the three orchestra parts, which simply did not sound good. To this day I can't stand to hear them. But our pianist very soon found that she could arrange music beautifully herself. She started arranging all our parts, 'til we were noted for those arrangements. She wrote beautiful cello parts. I've forgotten how many thousands and thousands of dollars we had our library insured for. I'm afraid most of it is rotting away in my attic at this time. It's in very bad manuscript. I could read the parts easily. But they were very valuable and everybody wanted them.

Playing in Hotels, and Mrs. Morris

Rowell: There were very fine trios at that time playing in the hotels in San Francisco. Without any radio or records the Hotel St. Francis and the Fairmont, and those, had Sunday evening concerts. They

Rowell: published them in the paper ahead of time. You came and had dinner, and then went in and listened to the concert. This was taken for granted. It's beginning to recur again now, just a little bit.

We played, too, at one of the finest hotels, the Key Route Inn, an old-fashioned, beautiful hotel. People would come from all over for a Sunday night dinner there and we would give a concert afterwards.

Riess: That was in San Francisco?

Rowell: No. That was in Oakland. But in San Francisco it was the Hotel Cecil. I wouldn't say older people, but I didn't realize at that time that its clientele were probably couples with quite a bit of means, because they were always running to Europe and coming back and telling us what to play. [laughter] I remember that time after time.

Mrs. Morris, the owner, had us for year after year. Our Thursday evening concert program was always printed and we always wore evening dresses. I would run right over from college and play. She was simply wonderful to us.

She owned a hotel in Santa Cruz, the Casa del Rey. She was so anxious to have us play down there in the summertime. Well, I wasn't about to play there. Santa Cruz was a name to me that I didn't like at all. Carmel I loved, but Santa Cruz was where the cheap people went and where there was a big beach where you lay out, and all this stuff. I didn't like any of that. I was only a freshman in college at that time, but I didn't like any of it.

When she found out that I was the one that was holding it up she insisted, in the middle of the year, on taking us down in her Cadillac with her chauffeur, and spending a weekend with us down there, opening up the hotel and showing us how it was. When she found out that I had never swum she insisted on taking me. They had a beautiful, huge swimming pool, the biggest one I've ever seen. She took me in and said, "I'm going to have you swim."

She had little pince-nez glasses, and I did, that you fastened on the side. She said, "You don't have to take them off." Then she said, "I'm going to take you to the deep end, I'm going to tell you to jump in with me and you're just going to paddle your feet, you're going to stay up, and we're going to go around." I did it all right with her. [laughter] I loved it!

Riess: She sounds like a very forceful woman!

Rowell: She was remarkable. Finally, my folks went over to see her--here I was, an adult, but my folks went over to see her--and yes, they would let me go. I ran into the letter recently which she sent back to my folks, saying the conditions under which she would take me, seeing that I was well cared for and well supervised. And I had to have three weeks vacation to go with my family to Yellowstone. That was the Yellowstone trip. That, I think, was 1919. Anyway, she was just really wonderful to us.

When I graduated from college she insisted on giving us a trip to Los Angeles. She owned a hotel down there. The day after I graduated I went over. She had us sleep at the Hotel Cecil before we went down. She had her chauffeur again, and her great big car. She took us in grandeur down 101 and stopped at the Samarkand Hotel, which was the hotel in Santa Barbara then. It was fixed all in oriental style in its grandeur. She gave us dinner and, of course, we had the royal suite.

Then she took us down to Los Angeles. I remember Grauman's Chinese Theater had just opened within the last couple of weeks. We went over and saw the footsteps--all that stuff.

Riess: Did she have you take your instruments on that trip?

Rowell: No. It wasn't a working trip. I don't think we played at all. We weren't there long, but it was a wonderful stay. She just gave us a holiday. Of course, I didn't play [for her] for years and years after that, all the time we were on KGO and NBC. But when I was married in 1936 she called up to know what kind of a wedding present she could send me, which I thought was lovely.

Riess: From the moment that you got together in high school, when you performed were you paid?

Rowell: Yes.

Riess: And who managed all of that? Did your families take care of that?

Rowell: Oh, no. Our families didn't pay any attention to us in this. I was the manager for all the first few years. I think I was a very bad manager. Of course, the YMCA paid us whatever they paid us. It was not great pay, I can assure you, in those days.

Joyce Holloway Barthelson, Pianist and Arranger

Rowell: I was just speaking with our pianist [Joyce Barthelson]. I talk to her almost every week, in New York. She did leave in the beginning of 1933 for New York. She played first in the New York Women's Symphony. Then she went on to do a great deal of composing and work on her own. She eventually married Ben Steigman, the principal of the Music and Arts High in New York which was, as you know, one of the outstanding schools that produced so many wonderful musicians and artists.

She went on with her composing. Carl Fischer would buy anything she wrote. She wrote about sixty pieces for Carl Fischer under another name, for mainly high school choirs. But sometimes she used her own name. When my son Galen was in Berkeley High he came home and said, "We're singing one of Joyce Barthelson's songs." The man conducting, of course, didn't know that I had had anything to do with her, or knew of her at all.

She's on her fifth opera now, just finishing it and having a hard time with the very last of the orchestration. Her other four operas have been done by the New York Opera Guild. For the bicentennial of this country, in 1976, they had two of her one-act operas done in the new Kennedy Center in Washington, which I thought was very nice. So, she's gone ahead quite a bit.

Riess: Was her training the same as yours, or had she begun earlier?

Rowell: She had taken lessons from a teacher, not a prominent teacher of any kind. None of us had great backgrounds with our beginnings--what would be considered anything at all. But she could play anything. She had that kind of an ear, and facility and musicianship. We didn't realize how fine it was.

I think that she was in a great way responsible for the trio doing what it did. We could not have gone far without three good sounding parts. She says now she doesn't see how she did it. She went on with her study in New York with very fine teachers in composition, theory and everything else. She hadn't gone on to the university to have her theory, as I did, but her own inner ear was a very musical one, and it heard what it wanted.

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Rowell: I don't think we would be considered great now, by the high standards of the Beaux Art Trio. But the fact is that it was very musical, always good music, well arranged for the three instruments, and we had excellent ensemble and played as <u>one</u>, not three.

Rowell: She [Joyce] played piano for one of the finest vocal teachers in the region at that time, Mrs. Carol Nicolsen. She [Nicolsen] taught the singers, men or women, who were on NBC later. Whenever there was a tryout, without knowing it, they always took her students. The amazing thing is she hadn't sung a note since she was in her early forties, but she knew how to teach singing.

I'm always interested in this. You have to carry it inside yourself--what you're teaching--not outside. You don't have to say, "Reproduce what I'm doing," and try to make them do what you do. You have to make them know how to do it for themselves. She was able to do that whether it was a basso profundo or a coloratura soprano.

Riess: All the time that you were in college Joyce was going on with other musical work?

Rowell: Yes. She played for this lovely vocal teacher. She used to make wonderful arrangements of some of those songs in the lieder. She would take the Schumann, the Schubert and the Brahms lieder, all sorts of things and make them into trio numbers. It gave us a lead over the other trios who had only the regular trio literature, the Brahms, the Schubert and the Haydn trios, which, of course, we played, and then orchestra music. But you can't make a two-hour program out of them day after day. But we could do so out of our library, which I imagine held somewhere around five thousand to ten thousand numbers in it. We could really build programs continually out of that.

Riess: Could you explain to me what was wrong with the trio arrangements, that Joyce improved upon?

Rowell: That's very simple. If you were to take the cello, violin and piano parts from anything, the violin would have the melody always; the cello would never have the melody. The piano would be thumping away on something, which would be the chords filled in. The cello would have, usually, either a bass part or a very peculiar part--fill in.

Not as she always arranged it. Sometimes the cello would have the melody, sometimes the violin would have the melody. The other would usually have a counter melody, and this she would make up out of the harmony itself. She would make up a much better one than the orchestra part, because there would have been a second violin and a viola in between the first violin and the cello part in any orchestral thing. Out of the combination of those would come this part to her. I think she was the genius.

Riess: When a piece is "arranged," that means that a lot of original work has been done?

Rowell: Not always. Sometimes they've done almost nothing to it. For instance, if this cello solo has been arranged, and they've taken a violin part and put it in the cello range, and then put it with piano, they've done nothing to it. That's what they've done a great deal. But if they really have made new parts, then they have really arranged it.

Riess: Who were Joyce Holloway's teachers?

Rowell: She took mainly from Eva Garcia, here, who was not in any way as near as fine a pianist as she was, and most certainly didn't have the capacity to do the things that she did with the piano.

Later on, on NBC, they used her a great deal as a pianist for their different soloists. Most certainly if they had auditions they would use her. It would be amazing to see a great opera person come from New York and say, "Oh, no. I need that thing a half a tone lower." She could go in and play it for them a half a tone lower.

She could play the popular music--all the jazz music--of that time just as well as the classical. I wouldn't do it. I wouldn't sink that low. Even when we played at a hotel, long before I was doing other things, and people came requesting the popular numbers of the day, I would let her play them alone. I wasn't going to touch them on the cello.

Riess: That was really your attitude, that that was beneath the dignity of the instrument?

Rowell: Yes. Very much. Everybody would request "Sweet Little Buttercup." I would put my cello down and the piano would play it. It wasn't that I <u>couldn't</u> play it.

Riess: Was this something that the three of you would hash out ahead of time?

Rowell: No, not at all. They never criticized me for it; they never even expressed anything about it. Of course, when Joyce could play that type of music as brilliantly as she did, it suited everybody. That's what they wanted to hear.

We can't get over the fact that in trio we did not have disagreements. I shouldn't say that. We probably had disagreements, but we never had any quarrels. People don't understand three girls--and three is a hard number--going along for years really enjoying playing together.

Riess: When you got together was music your main interest?

Rowell: No. We had loads and loads to talk about. We three, particularly Joyce and myself, discussed everything under the sun. We didn't discuss music mainly. We were terribly interested in the world--involved in the world and the world situations.

For instance, going to the Hotel Cecil from campus--I was taking an economics major as well as a music major--I was carrying all my heavy textbooks. I would do whatever studying I could do between times, and of course always on the boat going across. We would discuss the economic times. They were very bad in those days, and went through some terrific days.

I guess it was my economics courses in college that changed me from being a good dyed-in-the-wool Republican into a real Democrat. By that I mean a complete liberal. My family never criticized me for it. During all the upheaval in San Francisco I was for the longshoremen--I was for all of this--and very interested in all the social upheavals of the times. When I read of Sara Bard Field, later on, oh how I was impressed with the things that she stood for.* Should I jump into that now?

Riess: No. We'll get that later.

Rowell: Getting back to the music, I left myself in music in high school with Mr. Trutner and his great influence, not only on me, or the trio, but on music itself for the whole city of Oakland, where he was idolized. I have a picture of him that the city of Piedmont published on his hundredth birthday, long after he was gone.

I was just sent this week the announcement for the Herman Trutner Memorial Concert, out at Holy Names College. His son taught out there, also. He had a number of children, but this son was musical--and died quite early--and they have a Herman Trutner Concert every year out there.

His influence, most certainly, has gone right straight on down through the years.

Riess: Can you remember in high school awakening to the fact that this was the beginning of a career?

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*Rowell had been reading Field, Sara Bard, Poet and Suffragist, an oral history conducted 1961-1963, Regional Oral History Office, University of California, Berkeley, 1979.

"The Arion Trio, a group of three young women from university circles, are playing themselves into the affections of large bay section audiences."
Alameda Times Star, Alameda, California, April 21, 1924.

Right: Arion Trio, 1930. Left to right, Margaret Avery, Joyce Holloway, Josephine Holub. *Photograph by W. Seely.*

Below: Arion Trio, 1924. Margaret Avery, cello; Joyce Holloway, piano; Josephine Holub, violin.

Rowell: No. It was just so simple. Everybody did something after school. One day we would have a trio coaching, the next a quartet coaching. It was something we took completely for granted. I don't know whether my folks looked on it any differently or not. They had to go with us when we played in the evenings, but we didn't have a whole lot of engagements. I told you how we got our name?

Riess: No.

Rowell: Evidently the high school Latin teacher, Miss Martin, was a very fine singer. She was going to give a concert, so she asked us if we would assist her. She said that she was going to put down our name, The Oakland Technical High School Girls Trio, on the program. She insisted that we find another name. I thought that she came with all the names, but evidently my mother had had the name Arion on a quartet when she was in college. So we chose the name, Arion, right then and there in high school, and she thought that was fine because Arion was a Greek god of music who saved his life by riding a double bass, when he was shipwrecked, to land and safety.

Frances Wiener and Josephine Holub, Violinists

Rowell: Josephine Holub was our violinist for years, all through college and our KGO days, on to our NBC days, from 1916 probably to 1932, which is a long time. She married at that time and didn't want to keep up her violin as much.

We began looking around for another violinist, which was a very hard thing for us to do. We tried out quite a number. We finally got Frances Wiener. She had just graduated from Curtis Institute which, as you know, is one of the finest places in the country to graduate from. They recommended her highly to us. We had to break her in, of course, to all our manuscript things, our reading and everything else. But she fitted in beautifully.

The amazing thing is, I always felt so inadequate to these people who graduated from conservatories because I'd never had any of that training or a great-name teacher, and of course she had had all of these people. Yet Joyce would always make me play the phrase to show her how it was to go. She could play the notes so beautifully but Joyce would always say, "Now, listen to where--" I never knew what was happening because I never felt that. I realize now that I always heard that phrase; where the phrase was going to go was what meant something to me, whereas it didn't necessarily as much to her, in that day.

Rowell: I think it is very interesting to note--and I might as well put it in here--that we were, all three, single and unmarried. Joyce did marry later and separated. We all eventually married men very much older than ourselves. I think that we needed it. All our discussions between numbers we were discussing not trivialities. We never spent any time hardly discussing beaux or things like that. We were always discussing the world of men who were writers and doers. We were all interested in the social good of the country. We were so interested in the underdog and what was happening to the country at that time.

I later married Professor Edward Z. Rowell from the university. Joyce married Ben Steigman. Frances Wiener married Lev Shorr.

I have to go ahead here. I played up to the night before I was married. The trio was absolutely astounded when I told them I was going to be married. They didn't know what to do. My husband insisted that I not go on playing professionally. When I left, the pianist said, "Well, I'm not going to stay on if Margaret doesn't." That was a great blow to me because I had never thought but that the trio would go right on. We had our broadcasting at that time, which was every night.

Frances called Lev Shorr, who was the greatest pianist around at that time. He was Yehudi's accompanist, he was the pianist for the San Francisco Symphony, and he taught so many of the fine people, like Stephen Bishop, who is in England now as a great pianist. Lev said, "I don't know anybody to recommend, but I'll come and play myself," which he did. He took over right after I was married and Frances finally married him.

Riess: Oh, I see.

Rowell: So, we all married husbands a great deal older, and men who were each completely outstanding in their own field, which I think was very interesting. We really were not interested in the average young person of own age.

Riess: During those years, were you dating young men?

Rowell: No. We were not dating young men hardly at all. Joyce was married before. Frances did have a boyfriend, but we didn't talk about it.

Dressing to Perform

Riess: You were three very attractive girls in the picture.

Rowell: We were most certainly not aware of it in any way whatsoever. I most certainly never thought of myself as even good looking. I don't think we were particularly good looking.

Of course, in those days we had to have mobs and mobs of dresses. Whether the people do nowadays or not, I don't know. Just this last week I was going to put on a dress I wore back then for one of my friend's forty-seventh anniversary. I thought, "Well, I'll put on one that's older than that," which I have. I think I had about twenty good evening dresses when I married my husband. I haven't thrown them away; I've given several of them away.

Riess: Was your mother still making them for you?

Rowell: Not after I was on NBC. She died in 1933. She had made them all the way through college, but after that I was on my own.

Riess: Did the three of you try to dress in a similar sort of way?

Rowell: Our evening dresses, that we did discuss. I was always just a little bit disappointed. The violinist was the only one of us who had a very great eye for dress. She was a very fine sewer also. Her dresses had to be just exactly so. She'd run out and pick one first and it was very easy for her because she played the violin. But I had to have a full skirt. This was not the era of full skirts in the least. The dresses of that age were terrible for playing the cello in. My older sister finally pursuaded me to have a scarf made to put across my knees when I played, which I did a great deal.

A violinist can play with any kind of dress, and beaded dresses were very much in vogue. You can't play in a beaded dress against the cello, even though I did buy one. But I had to put a scarf around me while I played. Our violinist would run out and buy first, and I would have to get a color to go with it. We always discussed color of dresses and I always ended up the third one, having to get what color would go with the other two, plus the thing that I some way had to be able to play that cello, even though I see some of the pictures which show me with one foot put clear under in order to get by in some way and not hold it between my knees as is done today entirely. It was a very great hardship for me to find a good evening dress to play in.

Riess: What is the ideal thing?

Rowell: Zara Nelsova, the great cellist, wears the ideal thing, as did Madame Guilhermina Suggia before her. That is a really bouffant skirt, sort of an old-fashioned dress.

[pause in tape to find a picture of Madame S.]

Trio Music and Programming

Riess: Were you always a trio? Why not a quartet?

Rowell: We were always a trio, just the violin, cello and piano.

Riess: That was the most popular thing to do?

Rowell: No. It's basically the way music is written.

Riess: But now all we hear are quartets.

Rowell: Yes, and we played string quartet in high school also. But that's a totally different thing. There were about two quartets in the world, then, that were well known. Now quartets have become the thing, I will say, and it's wonderful that they have, because the finest of all music is written for them, most certainly. I think the string quartet is the ultimate. I like it better than symphony orchestra or anything, as far as pure music goes.

But a trio of violin, cello and piano has much more leeway in what they play. The amount of music they can play is endless while the string quartet can only play what is written for those four instruments. You don't rearrange something for a string quartet. We could play all the violin solos--all the Kreisler solos--by fixing a very good cello part to go with them, sometimes transferring one to the other. But you couldn't do that with the string quartet music. It's classical, to be played in concert in a hall.

A quartet would play three numbers during the evening, at the most. We would have to play fifteen numbers during an evening, the shorter numbers and much more contrast. I think one of the things that made us go ahead was the ability to arrange an interesting program. With the amount of library we had we were able to do that.

Rowell: Our violinist, Josephine Holub, was the best one at arranging a program of any of the three of us. She probably didn't go as far in music but she could get that thing of one number being the contrast with the other, or fitting right in with it, and arrange a program that was going to be very interesting in the end.

In that era there were more shorter numbers done than there are today. We go to hear the symphony and they have a Shostakovich symphony that will last forty minutes maybe, and maybe an overture or something like that to begin with. But in that day back there--I go back to old programs--the symphony even sometimes played one movement from the symphony. When a violinist comes he will play three sonatas. It's just beginning to change.

Some of the people who are making the change [are] some of the violinists, and cellists. It's quite interesting. Casals always gave the first half of the program to a sonata, or maybe two, and the second half always short numbers. What made him so popular were those wonderful short numbers that he used to do. People sneer, practically, at short numbers on a concert program, but they are just beginning to bring them back. They're beautiful music.

Riess: You would, perhaps, not play the repeats?

Rowell: No. I don't mean that at all. It's the type of music. For the evening programs such as we gave at the hotels we never played a straight trio all the way through, like a Beethoven trio. We might take a movement from a trio and play it, but you didn't play a whole movement of thirty minutes while people sat and listened to you.

Riess: Is that because you felt your audience was basically a transient and a restless audience?

Rowell: It was not that, it was that nobody did it. When you went to a hotel to play, it was not the type of concert that you would play. If we were in a great big hall, we would play the whole trio. As I say, it would be the same way with the symphony and everything. There was this complete change from that to the thing of playing nothing but the large scores, without any short numbers.

A shorter number is usually something that the composer has written for the instrument. A big number is something he has written in several movements for the basic architecture of the music rather than in any way trying to show off the instrument.

Issue of Purism; Phrasing in Modern Music

Riess: Did you discuss the puristic aspects of this? Did you yearn to play the whole thing because of the integrity of it?

Rowell: No. Nobody ever thought of it. It was a different era and you had to live in that era to see it. All of this great classical came on later, when you had to be pure. Thank goodness it wasn't then! I think we've gone completely overboard in this trying to be absolutely pure and do just what the composer intended. Therefore, you don't put in an expression mark that he hasn't put in. I can't understand that at all. From the composers I know and have seen, they are absolutely excited when the performer himself puts in more than they thought was there. To me, to see a mezzo forte, then a forte, and then twenty-four measures later a piano, doesn't give you much indication.

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Rowell: If I would read this [picking up a paper] the way I feel many people want the music read--[reading] "We were grateful for the smallest of mercies we were glad when there was time to delouse before going to bed although in itself it was no pleasure." [no intonation] That's the way I read if I'm reading the notes right straight along.

Riess: Yes. No expression.

Rowell: But the composer just took it for granted, especially in those old days, that you were going to make music out of it and that you were going to make sense out of what he was writing. [reading] "We were grateful for the smallest of mercies. We were glad--" and so on, is the way you would read it. I feel so decidedly that it is left for the musician to see where it's going and what it's trying to say. We've gone completely overboard.

I've found this when I was with musicians. I've seen it over and over. I remember somebody telling of going to a composer and playing the piano part, and playing a chord that had the lines up and down to spread the chord out. [broken chord] He didn't. He played it all as one. He asked the composer and the composer said, "I couldn't do it; I've got a small hand." You see, it's just little things like this. Also, composers are very glad when you sometimes say, "Can I change this with this?" and they say, "Oh, that's better." Very often the composer will be happy for what the person does with it.

Rowell: I think that we've gone through a whole era now when we thought that we couldn't do anything with it, and our music has been absolutely dead where it should be alive. I think the singers are the only ones who've made it come alive, because they always have words; opera has had to make their music come alive. Opera has not been afraid to put in expression all these years, but other people have left it out for the goodness of the composer, and modern music, particularly, because they don't put in bar lines and everything else, they think that it doesn't go anyplace.

Riess: I could understand that maybe there's a worship of the note as it has come down, perhaps, from Beethoven. But for Stravinsky, wouldn't orchestras now feel that he was so close to being a contemporary that they could rearrange?

Rowell: Well, but I would say that to hear Beethoven played as I think he wanted it played, with the warmth that he wanted, instead of just giving, as I have heard, a good performance of Beethoven, note for note--I do feel that you have to get into the composer. You have to know what he was like, what he wanted, and what type of a human being he was.

Beethoven was and always will be my favorite. I've been in love with him all of my life and I know that I probably would have not enjoyed one minute with him personally. Most certainly, if I had been married to him, it would have been an impossibility. He was happy one moment and absolutely furious the next. I always see him going up against a stone wall, bumping his head into it, and then turning around and being a different individual. I see him being absolutely impossible, and great.

Riess: Perhaps people are worshipful, though, of the older composers and unwilling to tangle with them, and yet willing when they have modern music?

Rowell: No. I would say that it's just the opposite, to a certain extent. I feel that the older music has come down, perhaps, with the tradition of making it say something. Therefore, we still love it because it really says something. But in these last few years I have had more joy in getting hold of these modern compositions that people write at the University of California and elsewhere, one right after the other. I have to teach those people to play them in Hertz Hall for a big concert.

I would say the Imbrie concerto is one of the most difficult things written for the cello--so difficult that I gave a copy of it to Rostropovich but I don't think he plays it. I know that he can play it, but it is very, very difficult and to get any meaning out of it is almost impossible.

Riess: That makes it sound like a failure as a musical composition.

Rowell: Well, no, after working and working and working with it--the whole thing is to see where the line leads. You have to see that there is music in it. If it's in the twelve tone row and they're only interested in getting those twelve tones in, it is hard to find, but it is there. They have to play it so that it has sentences, and sentences with commas.

I had this out with my son. He happens to be a writer and often gives me his manuscripts. I'll go along and put in commas every once in a while. He'll say, "Mother, you know commas are out-of-date completely. Nobody puts in commas anymore when they write. You just have to put them in for yourself when you read." This is really true.

I think that music has taken that on until modern music seems to be going on and on endlessly when you see it. They may put in expression marks like a double forte and a sforzando. But to find out where it's leading and what it's trying to say, well, of course many of them aren't saying anything. I had a young composer taking lessons from me for a long time. He would come from school right here and if I were doing something else at all he would pick up his pencil and go on composing. I would always say, "You just sit down and do it?" He said, "Why, yes, of course. It's all mathematical. I can do it anyplace, anytime."

I think this has gotten over to many of the young people. They do work it out, very definitely, but I really don't think they have any idea of the impact of music on the human soul. A great deal of modern music does not have that in it. Some does, and when the modern music has it it's wonderful. I don't think it's even begun to explore the possibilities. I'm not against discord, at all. I am against music that just goes on and on without having commas and periods taking you so that you understand where you're going.

Riess: Had you heard Imbrie play this piece, or had anyone played it as Imbrie had expected it to be played?

Rowell: One other person, also a former student of mine, had played it with the Oakland Symphony years ago and I had not enjoyed it. This time we worked it and worked it through until the first performance with the Cal Symphony came off very well, I thought. But it could so easily take itself down into being only notes, and notes going someplace being very difficult against an orchestra. It would be hard to play, but rewarding. The minute that we really got a phrase to go some place, no matter if it sounded like a jumble of notes, it was still very good.

Riess: Would Imbrie turn up at the performance of the Cal Symphony and afterwards say, "That was interesting," or "That was good?"

Rowell: Well, he worked right with us on it at the last. I think we got it to go pretty much as he wanted it to go. He had ideas of it going places, very definitely. It has to.

I think maybe the beat got in there in music. People seem to enjoy it. The young people have to have that beat going all the time. It drives me wild. The beat takes over then, to me, what the music has to say.

Time and the beat are two totally different things. Time is something more as we live it. One hour is a little bit fuller than another hour. They're both the same space but they have different things within them. Music has to be considered so. I do see that it has to go on as time goes on, but it's what's inside of that measure that is important to bring out and one measure is different from another in its content. I don't mean that you vary the tempo a great deal, but within that tempo.

Casals perhaps carried it a bit too far for people--he didn't carry it too far for me--because he would stretch just the least little bit. Give and then take. I wouldn't call it rubato, but it was a beautiful sense of the importance of some notes. Just as I am speaking now and using some words with a little bit more emphasis than others. I feel that the composer thinks that a person is going to do that in his music, without him telling where to put it.

I remember my husband working with me at one time because I made the emphasis always in the wrong place in speaking. I think I still do, but at least people can understand me. But if you are going to just speak along and expect them to do it all themselves, it's very, very dreary.

Riess: It sets up a kind of tension because people wait to hear where it's going. It's difficult if you don't get it.

Rowell: Music should be a tension and a release all the way through. That's living.

Riess: If there's tension and no release, that's when people get up, leave their chair and simply walk out.

Rowell: Yes. But tension and then release is something so beautiful. I expect us to do it in the future much more. I think we're just coming to do it. I'm always feeling that we're in a period of music where we're working around the new mediums so completely.

Rowell: Some of them I like; some of them I don't like at all. I'm just waiting for a Bach to come along, as he did at the very end of an era. It took me years to know how little he was played after he died because they'd turned to something newer. He culminated a whole era.

Somebody should come along and grab all these ends that are going off every place into a Greek Theatre jazz afternoon, a symphony concert, an opera, all of these things, and begin to have something where the music will be more alive than the regular beat beat of today, more meaningful and more content within it. The beat doesn't have to have much content, because the beat is everything. The beat carries itself. But the beat with content is something very magic.

The 1915 Exposition, and the Musicians Who Came to San Francisco

Riess: What musical groups, chamber music groups, did you have to listen to, other than your own? I assume recordings were few.

Rowell: Yes. In the twenties sometime, there were the first of the old fashioned records, the 78rpms. We always heard of Casals, Cortot and Tiebaud as the greatest trio in the world, and I would say in the thirties they had their Beethoven trio record out. I remember hearing it and thinking it was the greatest thing I'd ever heard in my life.

What helped us a great deal [to understand how it would sound] in those days was our coachings with Louis Persinger and Naoum Blinder. I remember going to Persinger and spending probably a whole hour on twenty-four measures, maybe forty-eight measures, of a Brahms Hungarian dance, just to get that wonderful thing [sings the passage] exactly right. That hasn't got the beat, but that has that wonderful thing of rhythm. Today I almost never hear it played the way I want it played.

Persinger would not accept anything except just exactly the perfection of what he wanted. I can't remember his teachers right now, but I guess it was Ysaye, who of course did them with Brahms. When you had these things coming down as directly as that to you, and could get the feeling of them inside you, you knew what was demanded out of the music.

And let me put one thing more in your mind. In those years San Francisco was such a town, with such a history. In 1915 was the great exposition. There's only been one exposition in

Rowell: history, in any of our part of the world, before the 1915 and that is the Paris Exposition, when the Eiffel Tower was built, in the 1800s. The Chicago one in the 1880s didn't compare to the 1915 Exposition. It really brought together people from all over the world. They came here for that. There simply had never been anything like it, and there hasn't been since.

I don't think we realize, when we go by the San Francisco Marina now, that that was all built-in land. I have here a map of the San Francisco Bay with all the different shipping lanes clearly marked, for the ships coming in from Mexico, Central America and the Panama ports; for the ships coming in from New York and Europe via South America ports; the ones coming in from Australia and New Zealand. The next line, clear over is Honolulu and Guam. The next is Japan, China and the Philippines. The next is from Alaska, and the next from Puget Sound and the coast. [looking at drawing] Can you see those things coming in from the Golden Gate through there? Can you imagine what that meant to San Francisco in those days? What made San Francisco was that harbor!

Then, to see what they did architecturally for the Exposition. The only thing remaining, of course, is the Palace of Fine Arts. Everybody thinks, "Ah, yes. That's great." But that was such an incidental thing.

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Rowell: I believe the Berkeley pier was built for the Exposition, if you've ever wondered about that pier that goes out there and dead ends at nothing now. The boats ran from there to the Exposition. And they ran from the Oakland pier to the Exposition. So, you didn't have to go to the Ferry Building, you just went direct from here.

There was no limit to the wealth put in, or to what the different countries could send at that time. And there was no feeling of differences. There wasn't such a thing as one country sending and not another country sending; we were all one world. David Starr Jordan, president of Stanford, said at that time there couldn't possibly be another war. We were too civilized for it.

Here is a view taken at night. You cannot imagine the brilliance of that place at night! I don't think electricity meant a thing. If you can imagine what goes into just one Arch of the Rising Sun! All these things were destroyed so soon afterwards, I suppose to make room for real estate. I never thought of it at that time.

Rowell: Of course, the Court of the Four Seasons was simply beautiful.

Riess: Did teachers prepare students in some way to appreciate it? Or did they just go and wander around?

Rowell: Oh, I guess so. I did go with teachers, but very little. I was a freshman in high school. I went on my own. I'm afraid my sister says that I kept running for the place where they sold scones, which everybody did, and stood in line for them.

This is a perfectly beautiful book put out by Paul Elder, the great book man of San Francisco. This book is Architecture and Landscape Gardening of the Exposition. I had about three books that went together with this.

Riess: I've seen the one that Eugen Neuhaus did, The Art of the Exposition.

Rowell: Yes. That I have too.

Riess: You all knew, when you were there, that it was going to come down, but it must have seemed inconceivable.

Rowell: I don't think I knew that. I don't think I thought that that could ever come down. It was so permanent.

I think it's the statuary that got me. That's when "The Thinker" came, Rodin with it, and that's when Saint-Saens came over, and conducted. That Exposition changed the face of San Francisco, because these people kept pouring in. Most had to come by boat, of course, but they came from every place there, traveled across the country from Europe to get there.

I had just taken up the cello, as I told you. I got it on my birthday, December 11, 1914, and this started in 1915. So I'd been playing almost no cello at all. My mother loved the Exposition. Her sister came out from Montana to go to it. The two of them were over visiting one day at the Exposition and they heard music. They started going toward the music and my mother said that she almost fainted when she saw me sitting there--it was the Tech High orchestra, of course--playing the cello, because she'd never seen me play the cello before in public. [laughter] Of course, I wouldn't tell my family I was going to do anything like that. I never told them when I was going to play any place. But, that was brand new to me, to go over and play at the Exposition.

Rowell: San Francisco had always been a cultural center. Wasn't it Caruso who was at the opera house during the 1906 earthquake? San Francisco had been that. But when these musicians came from all over every place to that Exposition and saw it, they fell in love with San Francisco and they never left it.

Alfred Hertz came from the Metropolitan Opera to the Exposition, stayed on, and died in San Francisco in 1942. He was, of course, the conductor of the San Francisco Symphony, and built up everything. Being both the leading German conductor and then New York conductor, you can imagine the musicians who saw to it that they came to San Francisco.

It was he who brought Louis Persinger, who was the concert master of the Berlin Philharmonic before that, who had studied under Ysaye. He was the concert master of the San Francisco Symphony for years, and one of the finest. (One of his students was Yehudi. Francis Shorr studied with him at the same time.) I've mentioned we went to him for coaching. I had no idea of that background of his when we would go over there, ring his doorbell, and take coachings from him.

The caliber of music in San Francisco was remarkable. It was first class. They're always talking of going back to Alfred Hertz's days now. They think there hasn't been another great conductor until Pierre Monteux.

They formed a beautiful quartet which was Louis Persinger, first violin, Louis Ford, second violin, Nathan Firestone, viola, and Horace Britt, cello. Horace Britt would always give me tickets to come over and hear them play. It was known as the San Francisco String Quartet, made out of the symphony members. It was interesting that when the Pro Arte Quartet, the outstanding quartet in the whole world at that time, from Belgium, when their violist broke his arm they sent right to San Francisco for Nathan Firestone to come over and take his place, which he did.

Riess: Performers were drawn here by the beauty of the place, the Exposition and everything, but they stayed here. What did San Francisco really have to offer?

Rowell: Jenny Lind was here at the time of the Gold Rush. Musicians did make their way here. Caruso was here. I think that all of this would tend to say that. San Francisco was always a cultural center. It always had the artists, the musicians. Along with that, the Exposition gave it the center of being world-wide.

Rowell: They told me that in this country it was New York, then Salt Lake City, and then San Francisco, for all the great artists. They made a stop on the train for Salt Lake City because, as you know, music means a very great deal to the Mormons. They had the great singers come. And, of course, the Mormons believe in the theater very decidedly. (That's one reason the Puritans didn't like them, [because] they loved music and the theater and went ahead with those things.) Your artists coming out, many of them gave something in Salt Lake City, then came on to San Francisco. But never Los Angeles.

Riess: Well, of course, there was always wealth here.

Rowell: Yes. I only wish there was some of it now.

Riess: These musicians, did they then come over to the university and become involved with the university in some way?

Rowell: No, not at all. San Francisco was San Francisco. Berkeley wasn't noted for its music at all. No, they were so busy with the symphony.

What I was trying to say was that these people formed that string quartet, which was a real quartet for here. Horace Britt gave me tickets, so I always went over and attended those string quartets, and thought they were the most marvelous thing I had ever heard, never having heard a string quartet before.

That Exposition was, I think, in every way an expanding experience. I'm just so sorry that the Palace of Fine Arts is the only thing that is left.

Riess: And then, the war.

Rowell: Well, the world war was actually on, when you stop to think of it, at that time in Europe.

Riess: So, wasn't it strange that a German conductor would come to this country?

Rowell: Yes. You know, really, that's interesting, that even though there was that war in Europe at that time, it shows how long it took us, as Americans--or me, as a child, maybe I should say--to absorb the fact that there was a tremendous war going on.

Horace Britt, Cellist and Teacher

Rowell: I should talk more about Horace Britt. My teacher until I graduated from high school was Mr. Trutner. Mr. Trutner wanted me to go to somebody else, but I went to Horace Britt, who was then the solo cellist with the San Francisco Symphony and rated as one of the five greatest cellists in the world at that time.

One of my friends is writing a book on him. Evidently the reason he came to this country was that he was in love with a young girl that his father wouldn't let him marry. She moved to Chicago and he came over. He had had beautiful training and was a very great cellist at a young age. Saint-Saens conducted the Saint-Saens concerto with him the first time it was ever given in Belgium and Holland. He was considered one of the very great coming cellists of Europe and he spoiled it, according to his family, by coming over here.

I just adored him. In order to get to my lessons I had to take a streetcar first to the Key Route train out to the pier, then the ferry boat, then in San Francisco take one of two streetcars in order to get to Horace Britt's home. I remember I was always so excited as I would ring that doorbell. My heart would be thumping. He was very good to me. I had had just this high school training. He had any number of students but he was very good to me.

I remember one time coming over and not finding him. I didn't think anything of it. My students have had to do that with me, I know. He was out horseback riding and he was so chagrined that he insisted on giving me two lessons free for that. But, I would carry over my five dollars, which I had earned, and pay him every lesson. I thought everything happened there.

At the end of the year, maybe it was two years, he said he wasn't going to teach any more. I found out later this was because he thought he didn't teach that well. He begged me to go to his stand partner in the symphony, Stanislaus Bem. No, I wasn't going to change! That was all there was to it! I was, as far as I know, the only one he kept on for the next year.

I enjoyed him. He played very artistically. At that time the San Francisco Symphony actually played encores. I've never heard of them doing that before or since then, and I can't tell you how many times it happened. Mr. Britt was very much aware of it at the time I was taking from him. If the San Francisco Symphony got an encore they would bring the harp and Mr. Britt out to play "The Swan" as an encore for the San Francisco Symphony.

Rowell: He told me privately, "I get more nervous and I feel it's harder to play 'The Swan' well than to play the whole Saint-Saens concerto." Isn't that interesting?

I can see what he means. Maybe he made me scared of it. I used to be scared of it. Now all my students play it when they're very young, but he did play it very beautifully, as Saint-Saens himself wanted it, exactly.

Performer's Fears

Riess: Did you have any question about your own ability when you were face to face with your first real cello teacher?

Rowell: Oh, yes! I never thought I played well. When I was still in high school I had to play a solo for an assembly, and it was to be a paid assembly--where the kids had to pay to go to the assembly. I was frightened to death. I thought I played absolutely terribly. That was about my first year of cello, at the end. The pianist was a senior and graduating. I didn't see her for years after that. I said to her once, "I've never gotten over playing that solo when I was so nervous." She said, "You played it beautifully." I'm sure, to this day, that I didn't. I didn't tell any of my family I was going to play it. I did put on a pretty good dress to wear to school, I remember. I was absolutely scared stiff.

But I was always frightened when I was going to play. I don't mean just nervous; I mean frightened of an audience.

[break in tape to answer telephone]

Rowell: I never felt I was any good, but I loved playing. I didn't like appearing in public. The trio always was much easier for me than solo playing, because we did it together. But the minute I had to play a solo, then I was really nervous.

Riess: But you had to appear in public. Anybody who is an instrumentalist simply has to appear in public.

Rowell: That's right. I realize that so much. I see the difference in my students. I see some students who play much better when they play in public. Ned Flanders was one of them. They really rise up to the occasion. They're better when they're playing for somebody than if they're just playing for themselves.

Rowell: I would always say, "Oh, I wish you could hear me in my own kitchen at midnight." I could really play then; I could really express myself. I mean on a solo. This would not be true in trio music. Usually I could come right out in it and enjoy myself very much.

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Riess: Britt would say that it got more difficult to play "The Swan"?

Rowell: It was not more difficult, it was just that he was always nervous and that he felt it was more difficult to play "The Swan" than the whole Saint-Saens concerto. That I can see now. That had to be phrased so exactly. He was always taking a breath and doing a whole thing through in that breath. If you know the thing technically, the technical things are not so hard for you. It's when you have to put yourself into it that it's hard. I think he did it beautifully.

After two years with Britt I did change over and go to Stanislaus Bem. He became my main teacher. He had graduated from the Belgian Conservatory, which at that time was considered the greatest conservatory in the world. It was the one that Pablo Casals had wanted to come to and did not. His teacher there had been considered the greatest teacher.

Mr. Bem played very beautifully. He was the assistant principal in the San Francisco Symphony. He was not the principal, ever, and he would not have been because--I found out later--he simply did not read music well. Like so many fine artists, he memorized and could play beautifully, but he had to know it very, very well. When he had to take my place, as he did later on very often, in the trio, I would hear the notes that were wrong, and such things. They would bother me very much. He did not read rapidly, but he played beautifully what he knew--a beautiful soloist. He must have taught me a great deal. I didn't realize it at the time because I didn't do a lot of practicing. I couldn't do too much practicing.

Riess: I was going to ask about that.

Demanding College and Rehearsal and Performance Schedule

Rowell: My sister, after that first year in college, made me slow down. I was trying to take a double major in college. I was taking a great deal of economics. At Christmas vacation in my first year--

Rowell: as I said, I'd had less than six months of private lessons--Mr. Britt recommended me for this pay job in San Francisco, which was playing for the Maitland Theatre, which was a theatre to which all the elite came. They did the Ibsen plays--that type of play.

There were two other people, a very fine pianist and violinist, both of whom were very well known socially in San Francisco. So it was quite the thing to go to the Maitland Theatre. We only played the music at the interlude. There we did play nothing but the straight classical, like a movement from a trio. I remember the Arensky trio.

Riess: With your Arion group?

Rowell: No. It was the first time I ever left them. But this was just at night.

Riess: Was there a lot of difference playing with the two others?

Rowell: Oh yes. Very different. Of course, it wasn't as enjoyable, to me, because we didn't have enough rehearsal on it to begin with. With the trio we rehearsed every day. With this we didn't rehearse as much, but we didn't play as much music. You just played one number between each thing, and you changed probably each week. You only played two or three numbers a week this way while the other way you were playing the whole literature, which was very different. But I enjoyed it and got very good pay for it, for those days.

I had to take a ferryboat back and get home after midnight, and then go on to college. I did it during Christmas vacation. I did it for quite a few months. I had to decide the next year whether to go with something like that or stop out and do music mainly. I wanted to stop out and do music. I think then was when my family said, "Oh no. You don't do anything like that." So I didn't. And I gave up that theatre thing. I only did it, probably, for several months, but I enjoyed it while I did it.

Riess: When you say stop out and do music, you mean leave school?

Rowell: Yes. I thought I'd like to take a year off from college between my freshman and sophomore year and just do music. My sister Marion says now that she got hold of me at that time and said, "Now look. The thing you ought to do is to take five years to do your college course, instead of four, and then you can go on with your music." That's what I did. I always got my three hours of practicing in before I left home in the morning, and then was free for the rest of the day.

Riess: That's a lot of practicing, isn't it?

Rowell: I found it very hard to get practicing in. I don't think I ever got in enough. I doubt if I even got in all my three hours before I left, to tell you the truth. But that was the time I laid aside for it.

Choosing an Instrument, Cello Pedigrees

Riess: Were you still using the cello that your father had picked out for you?

Rowell: Yes. That cello cost thirty-five dollars, for the cello, the bow and the case. We bought it from Mr. Aschow, one of the very loveliest of men. I can't tell you how much everybody appreciated him. I finally, just this last year, bought his cello back from his daughter that he played and his father before him.

Riess: It was a fine instrument, the first instrument that you had?

Rowell: Oh, no. For thirty-five dollars, a fine instrument?

Riess: I know. But you kept on using it all the way through your trio days.

Rowell: People were not that conscious. It wasn't like today, where everybody's after an instrument with a name attached to it. Nobody cared. I guess I'd heard of Strads and Amatis, but I never expected to own one. I never even desired to own one. I don't now. I don't want to own one.

You were asking once if I thought I was my father's favorite. I was very much drawn to him and he was awfully good to me, as I can see through all of this. It was hard to get around in those days on streetcars and do everything. I always knew I could call on my father for anything. There wasn't anything he wouldn't do for me. He was assistant superintendent of the Oakland schools and had his office on the eleventh floor of the City Hall. I would go up, if I was late, and say, "Dad, I have to get some place." He would stop and take me. I would also leave my cello in his office if I was going shopping, which I did very often. I always was making my own clothes and doing things like that.

I left my cello in his car one time, came down, and it wasn't there. I thought that maybe somebody in his office who was always saying I was careless about where I left it had taken it.

Rowell: I went up and said, "Did somebody take it?" They said nobody had taken it there. I couldn't believe it. This was my senior year in college. I couldn't get over the loss of it. We had engagements. I think I must have borrowed another cello from Aschow, and people called up wanting to lend me cellos. I couldn't find anything that suited me. I tried very expensive cellos.

I had had my cello insured with Lloyds of London for two hundred dollars. I just wanted that thing back. I cancelled every solo engagement that I had. I still played trio on a borrowed cello. I didn't like any cello I played on. There was nothing but this thirty-five dollar cello for me.

After weeks of it Lloyds finally called and said, "We have your check all made out." I said, "I don't want it. I won't accept it. I only want the cello. That's all there is to it." I finally said, "I want you to look in all the pawn shops everyplace." Finally one day they found it in a pawn shop. It had been pawned for twelve dollars. So I got it back. I was the happiest person in the world.

I would say that I was offered as much as five hundred dollars for it while I was playing on KGO, which was a huge price in those days. People would call in and want to know what kind of a cello it was, if they could buy it. Of course, it was never for sale. I finally gave it away to some poor soul after I was married.

I didn't have another cello until Stanislaus Bem's cello. His and his wife's folks both were all in Russia in the late twenties after the Russian revolution, and they wanted to take a trip back to Russia. Everybody was Russia-conscious in those days. Lev Shorr and his wife then wanted to go to Russia. This was after the revolution.

The Bems wanted to get there very much. They were Polish. They wanted to see what was left of their family. He needed the money so badly that I lent him the money. I was always the only one with money. It wasn't a huge amount, but I lent my brother money at the time each child was born. I gave all my earnings practically--I don't know how many thousand dollars--to "Stash" Bem and his wife to go to Russia with. He gave me the cello.

I didn't expect to see them back. I thought they would stay over there, as they thought they would. But they were very disillusioned when they got over there, as everybody was. In no time practically they were back again. He had no money to pay anything back so I always just kept the cello. That's one of my best cellos today.

Riess: Where were those two instruments made? The thirty-five dollar one is American?

Rowell: I don't know. The other one is supposed to be a Vuillaume, which is an expensive instrument. Now they tell me that it's not one. I'm not surprised at all. I'm not after names. It's evidently older than a Vuillaume and Vuillaume put his name into it, but it is in no way near as valuable as a real Vuillaume.

I had one instrument that I fell in love with. I played solos with it and thought it was the greatest instrument. I took it to Aschow to evaluate. I've forgotten what value they gave it at that time. It was almost nothing, you know, for then compared to now. He told me the top price to pay for it. They would never come through with it. Just when I was going to play a great big solo they told me I had to give it back, which broke my heart because that was my cello. I should have paid more for it and taken it right then and there, but I wouldn't go above the price that Mr. Aschow, who knew everything about instruments, quoted me. They let me play on it that night and came and took it away the next day. I was broken hearted. That was the only instrument that I'd ever actually fallen in love with.

Years later, maybe as much as fifteen years ago now, I ran into almost a duplicate of it. That is my treasure now. My student Scott Kluksdahl, who is going to Harvard, has it. It's a beautiful instrument. It's valued at twenty thousand dollars, but it's probably worth even more.

Riess: Why do your students end up with your instruments?

Rowell: Because they need them and I don't, pure and simple.

Riess: What makes a good instrument for you?

Rowell: I'm one that does not go by pedigree. Everybody goes by pedigree. I have a student of mine in New York looking for an instrument. He can't find anything under $150,000 that will suit him because it does have to have a name attached to it. I tried to lend him this instrument of mine, which I think is simply gorgeous, but he didn't take it. He's looking for a big name.

The quality of tone is the only thing I look for. I don't care what happens otherwise. I don't care how it's made or anything else about it except the quality of tone.

Riess: That sounds like that's all it's about anyway.

Rowell: Yes, but it's amazing to me what happens in the cello world. One of my students paid twenty thousand dollars quite a number of years ago. His instrument is fully worth it now but it wasn't worth it at all when he paid for it. I wouldn't have given three thousand dollars for it, I don't think. But it's worth the twenty thousand dollars now. He's had it fixed up. But instruments have gone up just out of all proportion to anything else in this world.

The ease of playing also does come into it, and the carrying tone comes into it. I have another student bringing me instruments every week to hear. I think her present instrument is simply beautiful but it has a small tone. She's in an orchestra and feels that she isn't loud enough. I feel that you can get almost any instrument that is well made to carry up to its capacity, but some carry much more than others. That carrying power has a great deal to do with it.

Of course there are some perfectly beautiful instruments. Nick Rosen, who got the Naumburg Prize and is the first cellist to get the Tchaikovsky Award, in Russia--the first American to get any prize since Van Cliburn--is playing a perfectly beautiful cello that he just got. People do get hold of old cellos. This is somebody dying and leaving a cello to him. Zara Nelsova has a perfectly gorgeous instrument that was left to her--a Strad. People do get fine instruments. They're very few and far between these days.

But there are many good cellos, and many good cellos that are reasonable, if people only would look for them and be willing to accept the sound instead of a name.

Riess: Do you think that a person is imprinted with his first cellos, as in your case?

Rowell: No, I don't think so at all. I think that I just had a sound in my mind and wanted it. Evidently that cheap instrument--because that's what it was--had a good sound. I've heard other cheap instruments that sounded excellent.

I started Carol Morrow on the cello. Bonnie Hampton had her for a summer and then gave her over to me. I gave her a cello of mine. She had that all her life. I don't know whether she had another one before she went to Juilliard. I guess she did by that time. She had one given to her. But all the time she was winning prizes and playing with the San Francisco Symphony it was on this instrument that I gave her. I don't know what kind of an instrument it was but she got a beautiful quality out of it.

Riess: Have you played any of the collection of instruments that Ansley Salz and Helen Salz gave to the university?

Rowell: No. I don't know whether they've ever been given out to play on, have they? Do you know?

Riess: I don't know. I just wondered.

Rowell: I know that they've never lent the ones out in Washington D.C. until this year. This year the Cleveland Quartet has them.

Young Don Weilerstein, and Musical Families

Rowell: The Cleveland Quartet brings me to something else. [searches for a recording] I just got this record last week. I get every record that he ever plays given to me. Do you know of the Cleveland Quartet at all? I just read the New York Times, I believe it was, saying that they were without doubt the greatest quartet in the world. That could be disputed, I'm sure, by quite a number of quartets, but many people class them as the leading quartet of the world. They've played behind the Iron Curtain, in Japan, everyplace under the sun. They're so busy they're dated up three years in advance, all over the world.

Donny [Weilerstein], their first violinist, grew up across the street from us here. He was Galen's playmate when they were young. They're just six months apart in age. It's been more fun to see Don progress on the violin. I don't know whether he will like me to tell all the stories about him when he was young. He started very young on the violin. In fact, they've been here since 1950. No, they've been here longer. Anyway, he and Galen went to nursery school together when they were about a year and a half old. Don's grandfather, aged ninety-seven, always likes to say that the Weilersteins bought that property just so they could build a house to be near us here. I'm almost beginning to believe it. They are the most wonderful neighbors that anybody could have.

Even before they moved here, Rose started Don on the violin. She would call me over because she didn't know how to put his fingers down on the strings. I would sit on the floor--that was the only way I could teach him--and try to place those fingers so they'd be a whole tone and a whole tone, and then that half tone apart.

Rowell: We used to take our vacations together. During the war Ed only drove his car down to the campus and back, never anything more, and I had my car, so we saved up all his gas coupons and we had enough gas coupons to go to Yosemite. It was marvelous. The three of [Rowells] went. You can imagine the very few people there. We got a Curry's tent. [We] were clear away from everybody, having a wonderful time by the river.

My father, at the time, was extremely ill. He was in his eighties and I was terribly worried about him. When they had a runner come to tell me that I was wanted on the telephone, long distance, and they were holding it--it was about a half a mile to the nearest telephone--I started running over in fear and trembling. I got to the telephone, picked up the receiver, and the voice said, "This is Ralph Weilerstein. We're wondering if there's room for us if we come up there?" [laughter] I said, "Yes, you surely can." So, they drove in. I think Galen was about two or three years old. We had a wonderful summer together.

Don is very relaxed. Always has been very slow speaking, very relaxed, and Galen is very fast. Ed never could take the long walks, so when we took hikes, Dr. Ralph and Rose Weilerstein and myself, we would leave the two boys down with Ed. He would have a fit. Don in no time would be either slouching or resting and Galen would be going around in circles. They were absolute opposites. [Meanwhile] we climbed up the ledge trail, which is no longer permitted because it's so steep. We would have a wonderful time.

But to watch Donny grow from someone who, as I remember, didn't tune his violin between lessons, into this perfectly wonderful violinist, was really something. Wherever we were on a vacation they would stick that violin under his chin after he'd finished eating. He always got a good meal inside of him--he was a roly-poly--and then they'd stick his violin under his chin to get in his practicing.

Riess: Did you have some question about whether that was just a little bit pushy?

Rowell: No, not at all because the Weilersteins do everything with so much love. The love is what shows through. There's never anything pushy.

Riess: Why did they think that they had a musician?

Rowell: I don't know. I never could have told you that. My Galen had at least as much music in him as Don, but I was not that kind of a parent. I often wish I had been, but I'm not. I told you about

Rowell: John Dewey and his readiness. They didn't wait for any readiness. It's amazing what they got. I've changed many of my views on education. I still feel that if you give a thing with love, and show that it's given with love, that you can do a great deal. Each one of the Weilerstein children have grown up with this terrific sense of belonging and love and knowing that what they did satisfied their families.

Irene Sharp, with whom I've worked so much, has three daughters. She and her husband have brought them up with that combination of love and discipline which is the answer. I had the love but not the discipline. Discipline is not my middle name. [laughter] Even at this stage I am not one to tell my students how much to practice.

Renie Sharp has carried on a full cello schedule, fuller than mine. She has many more students than I do. She teaches at the San Francisco Conservatory and she teaches a huge group of cellists in Palo Alto. But she has found time to spend with each one of her children, musically, and develop them to the nth degree.

Take her oldest daughter, Wendy Sharp, for example, whom I've watched grow. She was a good little violinist but not showing exceptional talent. (Robin, the youngest one, showed exceptional talent from the time she was a youngster on. I can see her starting out with the little Suzuki tunes at about four years old. Paul Rolland, one of the finest violin teachers in the country, came to visit. I've forgotten what she played for him, but she wowed him over at about six years of age.)

But Wendy Sharp has just graduated from Yale Univer ty magna cum laude--the whole thing. She was the outstanding student. They went back for the graduation. The night before she gave a whole concert representing the whole class--Bach, Beethoven and Brahms violin sonatas--and did a magnificent job. Later in the summer they went down to Tanglewood for the final concert. The year before she'd gotten the prize for the outstanding violinist, which they thought was astounding for Tanglewood. They listened to all the things this year, not expecting anything because she'd gotten that, and here at the very end they gave her the outstanding student of all of Tanglewood, at the end of this last summer.

With that she has taken all her other subjects. I know she took geology and computing. Everything under the sun. A regular good, solid, hard course at Yale beside her music, and played in the best string quartet there. She graduated in her four years, and did everything right straight through. What I'm saying is that her mother knows how to teach with love and discipline. The middle child plays the French horn and is doing beautifully. The youngest, Robin, a violinist, is just a knock-out on both violin and piano.

III THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, EARLY 1920S

[Interview 3: September 27, 1982]##

Edward A. Steiner, and Influence

Rowell: When I was going through high school I always felt that I was not popular. Maybe I oughtn't to use the word unpopular, but not popular in any way. I didn't dance and I didn't have a social life as so many of the girls had around me, particularly our pianist, Joyce Barthelson. She was very popular with the boys and always going to dances and having a different boy friend. I had cases on people, but they were always much older than myself. They were usually ones from my Christian Endeavor at church--and that would be the Senior Christian Endeavor, while I was only an Intermediate--but I really did not go out with boys at all during high school.

It was at that time that my father was in charge of all the evening schools of Oakland. I don't know why he took me around with him, but I guess it was because I'd been reading the books on immigration when I was in grammar school, books by Edward A. Steiner. You probably have not heard of him. He wrote The Ebb and Flow of the Immigrant Tide and about five books on immigration. I read them my last year in grammar school in Oakland, going to the library and getting out one after another.

I cannot tell you the delight when my father said that Edward A. Steiner was coming to speak. I actually shook his hand. I realize now the excitement and privilege of actually shaking the hand of somebody you've admired and only through print. It really is something for all of us. It's that human touch that adds something to it. Grinnell College has its Edward A. Steiner building now. Bonnie Hampton, when she went back, the first thing she did was to send me a picture of Edward A. Steiner's building. She knows of my great admiration for such a man.

Rowell: My father realized my devotion to this, I guess, so he took me quite a number of the evenings around with him to the night schools. At that time they were given over almost entirely to Americanization. This was where there were all the foreigners of all sorts learning the English language. I'm not sure whether it happened while I was there with him, but I have a memory so clearly of a native who had come from a little island in the South Seas, ten miles long and about two miles wide, a few hundred miles from New Zealand.

When he left his country and came over, the people who had never departed from the island said, "When you go out into the world be sure to meet our brother." He went to New Zealand and took the the boat from New Zealand to New York, where he was absolutely, completely at odds with the whole world. He had never seen tall buildings, undergrounds; he had never ridden on anything fast. It was all just one great big whirl of a mess.

He finally got to San Francisco and then to Oakland, and was going to night school in the basement of an Oakland school. My father was there and spoke to him, and this man asked, "Have you ever heard of So-and-So?" (I wish I could remember the name of that wonderful family. They'd been missionaries out there.) My father said, "I know just where they live. They are very dear friends of ours." So, the meeting with the brother of the old friend that he had met on that one little island, ten miles long and two miles square, happened in the basement of an Oakland school. We thought that was quite amazing.

At that school, I would see all nationalities preparing for their Americanization. I think it affected my whole life. I did prepare basically to go into what we called social service at that time. That's the reason that when I got to college my first year I didn't even look at music.

Riess: But you were performing?

Rowell: Oh, I was performing all the time.

Edward G. Stricklen, and the Music Department

Rowell: What happened was I went in to see the professor of music. He was sitting at a desk, smoking a great big cigar, with his feet up on the desk. Almost lazy, I would say. I didn't even speak to him. I didn't have any feeling at all that I would enjoy working

Rowell: with him; I'd enjoyed Mr. Trutner so much in high school that I couldn't see it. I simply did not take any music course whatsoever my whole first year at the university. I played in the orchestra, yes, but I didn't do anything else except the trio.

At the end of the year, Professor Stricklen went down to Tech High, where I graduated, and said, "What's happened to Margaret Avery?" Mr. Trutner didn't know that I hadn't registered for any music, either. He was amazed. He called me right up and told me I had to go. I went back to this professor and they arranged for me to step right into every course on the sophomore level.

I didn't know that that professor had come down and attended my graduation from high school, when I had to play a cello solo with orchestra that I had orchestrated myself. I think he thought I had composed the piece. I hadn't, but I arranged it for cello solo and orchestra. And then, the trio had played for graduation, and my father had given a speech. (I wanted to go and hide after graduation because I didn't like the limelight. I never did. That was just a little bit too much.) But, I had no idea that this professor had attended that graduation.

Riess: When you turned up in his office, he didn't put your name together with the person?

Rowell: I don't know whether I even spoke to him when I went into that office. I think I took one look and walked out.

Riess: This was Stricklen?

Rowell: Yes.

Riess: Charles Seeger was no longer there?

Rowell: No. Seeger was wonderful, and Seeger was no longer there teaching. Stricklen was the one.

He put me right into sophomore level work the second year, in harmony and everything. It didn't bother me at all. I went right straight ahead and finished the four years. But my major was also economics, as it had been that first year. Along with that I was involved in several other things that I think I should put in.

Tri-Delt Sorority Trauma

Rowell: My sister had been a Tri-Delt, which meant Delta Delta Delta sorority. While I was still in high school, I said I had no boy friends, but I had a boy who was very interested in me all the time, always writing me notes. I remember the teacher calling us both down when he'd be passing notes from clear in the back to the front and all around, always telling me how much he was going to see me and so on, especially when we got to college.

He was being rushed by Pi Kappa Alpha, which was the one fraternity that I thought was wonderful. Men from there came down and worked at our church all during the week, doing athletics and so on. I thought they were just wonderful. He was rushed by Pi Kappa Alpha and he would say, "Oh, you're going to be a Tri-Delt."

Well, I came out, and here I didn't realize it at the time, but my sister was one, and I guess they rushed me, but I wasn't interested particularly, I didn't have that type of a mind. And yet, I knew I would have to be in one. I remember going up to a lunch and having the girls try to dance with me. I never had been to a dance in my life! I didn't dance well at all. I thought, "Gee, I wonder if I have to do this all through four years." And they just didn't take me.

This was the biggest blow to me of anything. I thought, "I'm no good at all," and I thought I had ruined my family's reputation. Nobody ever spoke to me about it; I just took it inside me and kept it there so completely! I thought I had disgraced my family. I remember serving tea to a group of very elite, beautiful women whom I adored--the superintendent's wife (he later became president of the University of Denver)--and all these people. They each said, "Oh, now you're a Tri-Delt." I had to practically run from the room with tears because I couldn't stand it.

I suffered more through that time! People afterwards would even ask me a question and I would burst into tears. I carried that around with me. When I saw this very boy that had been so interested in me in high school, I would just duck my head. I wouldn't speak to him, if you can imagine such a thing. I found out years later from somebody else that he finally walked up their steps, rang their doorbell and said, "What do you think you're doing!" [laughter] Isn't that funny? I've really carried it with me through the years without ever realizing.

Rowell: I think it's one of the best things that ever happened to me because I would never have been happy at that time of my life in that sorority type of a surrounding. As I've already told you, the three of us in trio were always discussing other things. We didn't discuss frivolous topics. We were geared otherwise. We were interested in the working man and working conditions. My family was not at all interested in labor unions, but I was terribly interested in everything connected with them. (Eventually we had had to join the musicians' union, which we didn't want to particularly, but we had to.) All our outlooks were very interesting.

I remember the three of us riding on a streetcar together in San Francisco, this elderly man sitting in the fourth seat. He finally interrupted us and said, "You know, I'm not used to conversation like that." We were, all three of us, talking about if we died what we wanted done with our bodies. [laughter] Whether we wanted them buried or what we wanted. Even at that time I said, "I want my ashes sprinkled in the ocean or the mountains," at that young age while everybody else was thinking of other things. This man was so surprised at three young girls discussing things like that on the streetcar.

Riess: Did Marion know that you were not going to be accepted?

Rowell: I never in my life discussed it with her in any way. I don't think she knew it at first at all, but of course she did know it finally. I think it disappointed her a very great deal, that they did that.

If anybody voted against you, you were not accepted, and I later found out the two girls who had voted against me. I liked them very much. I just knew I wasn't popular enough. That was all. But both of them later asked me to play for their weddings, and I did. I thought that was really quite something. I was playing in Santa Cruz for the summer. One of them came to the hotel for her honeymoon and came up and spoke to me and did so much. I really felt that she might have felt what she'd done.

Riess: I didn't realize that there was such a social small world at the university.

Rowell: There was at that time. I can laugh over it now. I cannot be thankful enough for that thing having happened to me.

Riess: Oh, you would have been an individual anyway, don't you think?

Rowell: No, I wouldn't have. I doubt that I would have gone on with the slant that I did, because that turned me even more toward my major in social economics. That turned me completely to it. I went back to those roots that were already in me. My course in immigration at the university was one of my thrilling courses. We had the same books to read that I'd read in grammar school. It meant everything to me.

Guidance from August Vollmer

Rowell: My course in criminology changed my whole life. I even worked for the Oakland Police Department. Professor [August] Vollmer gave part of the course in criminology, not the whole thing. I came to admire him. I went to him several times just for advice when I needed it.

Riess: Advice in the work that you were doing?

Rowell: No. In my own problems. I had problems. I could tell what one of them was, I suppose, since it's here. I very much admired a young man, and he was evidently madly in love with me. He was very crippled, which I appreciated very much. I was very attached to him. (This comes in much later, though, and you'll find out where it fits in. But I will bring it in here.) I enjoyed his whole mental capacity and so on, but my real feelings had been for somebody else entirely. It happened to be somebody whom he admired more than anybody else. He didn't know at all that I was in love with this other fellow, and he would keep saying that this fellow that I was in love with was one of the three finest minds in the world and understood so much.

It was very hard on me to have him so interested in me, you see. He began saying that he'd commit suicide if I didn't show him attention and marry him. I went to his mother with this. She said, "You can't do it; you can't possibly do it." If I'd felt everything toward him that I felt toward the other person, I would have done it. I admired him and respected him, and loved him in his own way.

I went to Vollmer then several times to ask him what he thought. Vollmer finally said, "Well, I think maybe he will commit suicide." That just worried the daylights out of me, as you can imagine. But Vollmer gave me all sorts of advice, which was wonderful. I didn't know then that he would later commit suicide himself, which he did. Isn't that interesting?

Riess: Very interesting. These men were at the university, the ones that you were attracted to?

Rowell: No. Neither one of them ever attended a university. This was later. I found, at that time in my life, something very interesting. Now I'm jumping way ahead, but I did find out that the men who went to a university at that particular time, and had a good time--and that was the time when there was all that rushing, whether you belonged to anything or not, dumping you in this and ducking you in that, and the relishing of all the fancy things that went on with going to a university--when they got through, they thought they had a university education and they never opened a book again.

This I found over and over. I found it with our announcers on NBC. I knew several of them very well. For them, all their education had happened in college. They would go back to those college days, sing the praises of those college days, while my friends who didn't go to college knew they didn't have a college education and made up for it by reading the heaviest of books, all the books they could ever feed themselves. They were the most fascinating people I ever knew in my life. I've never known brains like that in my life, never known people who could keep you fascinated day and night until you're full of ideas. I think I got more of my education from those people who didn't go to college.

Riess: Vollmer, you sought out as a counsellor rather than, for instance, the pastor of your church, in this personal matter. Why Vollmer?

Rowell: I guess because I had enjoyed him so much. Of course, one of my very dearest friends, Leonarde Keeler, had worked under him and with him for years. Leonarde Keeler had invented the Polygraph Lie Detector, as it was then called, under his supervision.

I found out that about nine-tenths of the girls in my class were going to a professor in criminology whose name I can't say right this moment. Later he was let out of UC and went to Pomona College where he taught for many years. He would have been one that I could easily have turned to, but he had left the university by the time I was out. I had no trouble with anybody while I was in the university. It was after I left the university that I needed help and advice.

Riess: That's interesting, that that discipline, criminology, would have such particularly sensitive people with whom you would feel that kind of rapport.

Rowell: Yes. That's true. I see what you mean. I never thought of that 'til this moment. Those people were extremely sensitive people, while policemen you don't usually think of in that term. Vollmer's whole idea of a police department was totally different from any other. The Berkeley Police Department was noted at that time all over the world.

Riess: Would you have sought the help of a psychiatrist if that had been appropriate?

Rowell: No, never. It never would have occurred to me.

Prayer Group

Riess: I am surprised that you see yourself as one who would have been changed by being a Tri-Delt.

Rowell: Yes. I don't know what would have happened to me. As you say, I doubt that I could have been just a good sorority sister, because I had already in high school--did I tell you that I belonged to a prayer group in high school?

Riess: Well, you talked about the Christian Endeavor.

Rowell: Christian Endeavor was different. Christian Endeavor was a Christian meeting that took place at church. When there was a state Christian Endeavor thing of some kind I went, and I evidently got up and said something. Our Latin teacher from school, the very one who had given us our name for our Arion Trio, came over to me afterwards and said, "You know, I have a prayer group at high school. I would love to have you join us." I said yes, I would.

It was after school and met in a place near the school. There were only six of us. We had to kneel down and it was a regular prayer session with this lovely teacher. And whereas I felt that I was very religious, I could not make any words come out in me whatsoever. I would go week after week and when it would come my time my throat was absolutely tied up. Nothing would come out. I don't know how long it was before I could even say a word. But I kept going. I knew sometime I might be able to. I finally did. I don't know how and I don't remember much about it except that at that time we all sort of committed ourselves to being missionaries in Africa.

Riess: You mean the prayer group?

Rowell: Yes. It was a very nice, close group to be with but it never meant as much to me as my actual Christian Endeavor where I knew everybody even better.

Riess: The prayers, then, it sounds like, were prayers for the betterment of the world or something like that?

Rowell: No. They were for anything and everything.

Riess: I don't think I know what a prayer group is.

Rowell: My sakes, I couldn't tell you. It was just getting down on your knees and praying, that was all. But I wasn't used to doing the public part. At home on Sundays, after breakfast, we all had to kneel. My father always prayed for us, for a long time. That I could take, very easily, and I loved it. You almost feel as if it's inside of you and you're saying it yourself and you can absorb it beautifully. But to say it out, no!

I found out that even to this day my religion is not anything that I can talk about easily. It's just not. It's way inside me. My nephew [Arthur Hakel] had asked me to write something on my religion.* So I've been trying to write something. I find that I have never been one to be able to get up and speak religiously. It's so deep within me that I cannot express it in words. I think I don't want to express it in words.

I really wonder if maybe my cello didn't come along and do something for me in that respect. I begin to realize that whereas I was never aware of learning technique as such, the thing that I always had was a feeling that every piece I ever played really meant something very deep to me. I always felt it completely.

I loved to play solos for all the different churches. I had never been outside of my own church at all. I thought that my church was wonderful. But when I first began going to other churches I found that same religious spirit every place I went. I appreciated it. I went to Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, everything, and very early to the Jewish synagogue where I played the Kol Nidre. I played for at least twenty-two years every single Yom Kippur the Kol Nidre for the Oakland synagogue. I played

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*Art Hakel is the author of "Margaret! Margaret! The Exclamatory World of Margaret Avery Rowell," Pleasant Hill, California, 1982. Deposited in The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

Rowell: for the opening of the Vedanta here, in Berkeley. I played even for the Catholics when they were not supposed to have string music. I played for the Mormons. I've played for almost every denomination that I can possibly think of.

I find each one such a beautiful service in itself, and so meaningful to the people that are there. I appreciate it. I cannot confine myself to one of those. I see what's at the heart of it and I can't take each person's little bit as being the whole at all. I think it's something so much greater than any of us have. I think, maybe, music comes closer for me feeling what could be called religion than words.

Meaningful Communication Through Music##

Riess: When you performed in hotels, did you feel that you were really bringing something to them?

Rowell: Yes! That's an interesting thing. I told you about going to Santa Cruz in the summers, didn't I? Well, I had had the least lessons, as you know, of any of the three of us. The others had many more years of real lessons behind them than I had. Yet I can remember playing at the Santa Cruz Casa del Rey, which was quite the great big, lush hotel of the time. Do you know who Paul Whiteman was?

Riess: Yes.

Rowell: Well, I remember that he walked into the hotel lobby and sat down in a chair, then got up, came over to me and said, "I want to hear you play a solo." I had to play one for him and then another. It was evidently a quality of tone and a quality of the phrase that he particularly enjoyed. I didn't know that. I had that happen several times. While I didn't realize it, I think from the very beginning I always felt that every note had to go some place, every note had to say something. It was that meaning of the phrase doing something, for me, that probably was the thing that carried me on in music and made me want to play.

I never played a composition that didn't have meaning for me. For a long time I stayed away from what I would call virtuoso pieces. If I didn't have that sense that I was playing something besides a whole lot of notes, I didn't want to play it.

Riess: In so far as music could bring something to the world, in the way that being a missionary could bring something to the world, do you think that you ever thought about what your music was doing?

Rowell: No, I don't think I did. I think I just did it, just as a flower blooms. I remember so well playing for a church service one particular time when I was playing a long, very slow solo, but one that I liked very much--I would always be making up words to it. After the service I think at least fifteen people crowded around me afterwards. Instead of saying, "You played well," each one said to me, "I can't tell you what you did for me this morning. I was thinking of thus and so." None of them were thinking anything of what I was thinking. But they didn't say, "You played beautifully." They said, "You made me think of thus and so." One would be a tragedy, one would be another thing. But each one told me that.

I remember that to this day because I was amazed. I was thinking of something so definite in words, yet my words didn't go across to them, but what was in the music did go across to them and they were thinking what they had to think. It made me believe in the universality of music more than most things.

I think we've lost a great deal of that in our modern music. I think we've gone out for the notes--where the notes are going--rather than what's underneath them. I hope that we'll sometime pull back to the other. I'm all for modern music. When I turn on some of it and hear how far they've gone in their richness of chords clear outside the scale and everything else, I'm not shocked, I'm amazed and almost happy. But I do feel that the depth of so much music has gone out of it until it is the notes, where they're going, rather than what the musical phrase is doing.

Riess: Maybe the performance suffers because they can't quite get into it now.

Rowell: Oh, I think they could get into it. I'm not as much an opera fan as I am a symphony fan, of course, but when I listen to opera I am amazed that they are getting what they're saying across whether you understand their words or not.

When I listen to a symphony, I'm just amazed at what is gotten across with definite meaning. By that I mean it's a different meaning to each person listening because they have to be ready to receive it. They've got the receiving apparatus and they can turn it into what they want it meaning.

Riess: When you talk about Santa Cruz or performing in the church, you're talking about a very charged performance on your part.

Rowell: It's charged on my part, but it goes out to them and they receive it on their own wave length.

Riess: I wonder if all the members of the orchestra perform with the same charge?

Rowell: That's very interesting. I went through a fascinating era when the whole subject of conductors came up much more than it does today. Many orchestras both in Europe and this country started to try a conductorless orchestra, having the concert master do some of the conducting while playing, but basically conductorless. They thought it would be wonderful, and it wasn't.

This is where the conductor comes in. This is where you can even say Calvin Simmons right at this moment comes in, because he was a charged conductor. Almost everybody in the orchestra adored him.

My favorite conductor would have been Bruno Walter. I felt that Bruno Walter had in him a soul of music and he somehow brought it out absolutely wonderfully. I can remember hearing the San Francisco Symphony twice in one week. I don't know who the first time was, but when Bruno Walter had that orchestra, I never heard anything like it. That cello section was two totally different cello sections. It didn't sound like the same orchestra. He did something to that orchestra that brought it together as one gorgeous whole. Every phrase almost hurt you. It was so beautiful.

[pause in tape while Rowell finds a photo postcard]

Rowell: There he is with Thomas Mann and Toscanini. Isn't that gorgeous!

Riess: Oh, it is! They're all absolutely heroic. Bruno Walter, Thomas Mann and Toscanini.

Rowell: Now those are three great men, totally different men. I can't compare Toscanini with Bruno Walter. Most people just adore Toscanini. I didn't. He was too much of a task master for me, and too much of a beat man. He brought in the beat; the beat in orchestra was everything. Ever since Toscanini you don't vary the beat during a whole movement, practically. Bruno Walter, unbeknownst to anybody, kept the basic beat, but within that there was the greatest of variety. It would be like a dancer with a Viennese Waltz slowing down one measure the least bit in order to emphasize the next measure.

Riess: Did you ever meet him or talk to him?

Rowell: No. I didn't have to.

Riess: I just wondered--.

Rowell: I know. [laughter] I have the funniest feeling about meeting great people. I'm not afraid of them, but I don't have to. I told you the handshake meant so much. I guess it does. I guess I would have been thrilled to have met him. I'd better change that. [laughter]

Social Studies

Riess: Let me just ask you some questions.

The studies in economics. You went through those four years. I wondered if you remembered the important teachers?

Rowell: I would say that my most important courses were the ones in immigration, criminology and the control of poverty. Those three courses I remember, from three different professors, as being the greatest ones. They stayed with me years and years afterwards. Lucy Stebbins and Jessica Peixotto were the two great women professors.

Riess: Was your family pushing you in the direction of a career in social welfare?

Rowell: Not in the least. My family never pushed me into anything in their lives. They evidently just didn't feel it. That was that John Dewey sense. I think they were very glad to see me go ahead in the music.

I think I told you that I thought I was stopping out for one year. I expected to graduate. I was very exhausted and tired when I finally graduated from college. I had taken five years to it, but I had played so constantly, I had used up so much energy in trying to do the two, plus teaching quite a bit, that I was ready to take a year off before going back for my social studies. Then I expected to take a degree in them.

That year I had thought that I would go to Ellis Island and just take a job sweeping floors or doing anything, just so that I could be around and see what people were really doing. I didn't want an official job; I wanted to get underneath it all. I wanted to go to San Quentin, where the women still were, and see what it was like. That was in 1923. People have done that since then.

Riess: Nobody was doing that then.

Rowell: No. I'd never heard of anybody doing it. I thought it would be just wonderful to go in as an inmate and really see what it was like, and then go back and get my degree.

I'm very glad things turned out as they did, though.

Riess: You must have been conscious that you had to make a decision sooner or later.

Rowell: Well, no. Life doesn't go that way. I didn't make a decision at all. What happened was purely that radio was just coming in. Of course, it was not a means of earning a living; it was a toy that people used. You went down and they put you on the air. Anybody would run to get on the air.

Antonia Brico

Riess: I'd be interested in hearing more about the music department at the university when you were there. It seemed small--Stricklen, Virginia Graham, Paul Steindorff, and Leroy Allen.

Rowell: Paul Steindorff I knew very well.

Antonia Brico, did I mention her going all the way through high school with me?

Riess: No.

Rowell: Then I should. Antonia Brico's name in high school was Wilhelmina Wolthuis. She was a big, strapping Dutch girl who had been adopted by a family in Oakland and brought up. We never once thought of her going on to college. She just wasn't the type of person that you expected to--her great, big, old high shoes, clothes and so on. But the first year in college, there she was on the campus playing in the orchestra. I think it was a little bit of violin and a little bit of piano.

She was interested in conducting even in those days. Paul Steindorff, who was the great conductor around here--he conducted the UC symphony, operas and so on--took a liking to her. He had a whole family of his own, but she came and lived with Paul Steindorff's family the whole four years and went through college, and got her degree along with myself.

Rowell: Because I took my five years, she graduated with me, and I believe I had just as many A's as she did, but she got this wonderful prize. I was also a major in economics--I belonged to both the Music Honor Society and the Economics Honor Society--but because the economics department sort of thought I was a music major and the music department thought I was an economics major, they gave the prize to Antonia. It was fine with me. I never, even then, wanted prizes as prizes. But I was just a little surprised when she got it and I didn't, because I had managed the Partheneia, which was quite something to manage--had to get the person to compose the music, got Paul Steindorff to come and conduct it, which he hadn't done before.

Antonia, then, I have followed right straight through. We have kept up through the years. She conducted in New York, she conducted the San Francisco Symphony in the Greek Theatre and around, and she's had the very interesting movie that showed all over the United States to people just waiting to get in called "Antonia Brico."

Riess: When did she change her name?

Rowell: She changed her name after college. She was determined, since she was adopted by this family, to find out more about her family in Europe. She went over to Europe with the sole purpose of finding her family. She spent months doing it, as I remember. She went back to Holland where her family, Wolthuis, came from. Then she went from there and finally traced it down to this Italian name of Brico and found something of her family over there. Exactly how much, I cannot tell you right now. But she left being Wilhelmina Wolthuis and came back as Antonia Brico.

She came out and was a part of our KGO Little Symphony.

Riess: That's two illustrious members of that music class. Was there anyone else that went on to be a performer? Or were they mostly teachers?

Rowell: I think they were mainly teachers. I remember Pearl White Hays as being very outstanding. She, I think, later became in charge of most of the music for the Berkeley schools. She married and had three beautiful children, one of whom I taught.

The Development of Cello Study, and Pablo Casals

Riess: I noticed that the Extension Division in the 1920s offered music instruction. Somebody named Weiss, somebody named Rosenthal? Were they people that you went and took classes from when you were in college?

Rowell: Oh, I didn't know anything about them. Never heard of them.

Riess: You didn't take cello lessons when you were in college?

Rowell: Oh yes! I took lessons privately, in San Francisco. There were no teachers here of that stature.

Riess: They were Britt and Bem?

Rowell: Yes, through my whole college and afterwards.

Riess: What was your awareness then of Casals and the great European cellists?

Rowell: Casals was always my hero. My first program when I heard Casals* was in the very early '20s. But I'd heard of Casals all my life. Stanislaus Bem knew him personally. Mr. Bem had gotten the first prize, which he didn't expect to get, from the Belgian Conservatory of Music, which was the outstanding place for cello in those days. He said that the person trying against him was royalty, and he played a very good cello, so he expected him to get the first place, but Casals was the judge and gave it to Stanislaus Bem. They remained very good friends all their lives.

Casals was the name, to me, of the greatest thing in cello playing. There were no records, at that time, of cello players. There were plenty of violinists. As early as there was a

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*I always had such complete adoration for Casals, whom I heard in person when I was about fourteen. I still have the program. I sat in the very last row of the balcony and was spellbound. I was always very shy. But I had the loudest handclap anybody ever had. And of course I clapped and clapped and clapped. Then, as now, I saved my claps for when everybody else gave out. And I well remember clapping after the others had finished, for the last encore, not giving up until the others finally joined me, and yes, he came back for an encore. I never before or since have been totally responsible for an encore! [recorded October 24, 1983]

Rowell: gramophone my father got one. He had Mischa Elman. Later on, all the violinists my father would get. But cellists? I do not remember a single cello record. I was saying this to Renie Sharp yesterday.

The first cello record of any concerto I heard was long after I was studying concertos. It was [Gaspar] Cassado, of all things turning the Schubert sonata into a concerto, a terrible thing to do. Of all the pieces I studied, there were none of them recorded at that time. Casals's recording of his unaccompanied Bach, which was one of the most wonderful things, was after I was married even. So, those things came much later.

Riess: When you were taking from Bem and people who had worked with Casals or knew enough about him, were there discussions of technique? From what I've read, there was very definitely an old-fashioned way and then there was Casals's.

Rowell: Yes. Cello lagged way behind the violin. Violin came into existence, I say, at the time that all of these instruments came from the viol family--from the soprano, alto, tenor and bass viol--from the time those turned into being the violin, which was much more brilliant than the lovely soft viols, the viola and the cello. Of course, we do have our bass viol, still.

When these instruments came in they were really not respected at first. The viols still had the edge over them and were more played. But the violin very soon captured the imagination, while the cello remained a step-child of the violin. It was big and bulky, hard to play and carry around. They expected you to play out of tune on it, while you were not allowed to play out of tune on the violin.

This was all due, basically, to the very careful training of the old violinists and the schools of violin. But, as with the churches and other things, the schools of violin hardly spoke to each other. They came from one player down to the next, inherited. The cello was left to itself. Either the people were very good on it, such as Boccherini, and all of those old-timers--really virtuosos--or else they hardly played at all and played in a bumbling manner, almost, and played along for as much accompanying as you could have. If you had a string quartet, you expected the cellist to play a little bit out of tune.

Riess: So no wonder there were no recordings of it.

Rowell: But even then it was more that the instrument was considered so big and cumbersome. What has really happened is that the cellos has been coming out like the underdog, very aggressively, saying, "Here we are," and demanding its own right. First the players on

Rowell: cello had to learn their own way. We are still doing it. We have not got our long schools of cello playing. They have some of them but they don't exist going back the hundreds of years right through your teachers, as the violin does. I can't say I come from such and such a school.

For this reason, cello is exciting. It's finding its own way now. It's found it until it does have a very secure sense of technique and being able to teach it in any country anywhere, just as the violin is now with Mr. Suzuki. It's much more international. We used to have to run to Europe if you were going to have any name on the violin, but now not so.

The "Great Natural Players"##

Rowell: I've seen the cello technique developed from its very infancy, where there were these great natural players. If you are so natural, you don't necessarily know how to teach. And the other thing, the building up of a very slow, sure, hard technique that had to be mastered by five and six hours a day, at least, of solid practicing of nothing but that difficult stuff, I've seen that gradually get into something today where we know what our basic principles are and we can begin to teach those basic principles from the beginning through music itself as well as exercises.

Riess: "The great natural players?"

Rowell: I'd take four what I would call natural players. The first one, of course, would be Casals. I always say, "Who were his teachers?" I can say that to fifty or a hundred people and they begin stumbling all over. Maybe some one person in the audience might know, but very seldom. It was a Mr. Garcia, who taught him at the very beginning for a very short space of time. Somebody came up after Casals had been taking a little while and said, "Well, how is little Pablo getting along?" Mr. Garcia said, "He plays better than I do already." That is the type of thing that we call a natural.

The next one would be Mr. Gregor Piatagorsky. He had many teachers, but he will say he didn't get anything from any of them. When he came to play for the San Francisco Symphony at age nineteen--and he played the Dvořák simply beautifully--he walked into the rehearsal, threw his arms around the assistant principal, Wilhelm Dehé, and said, "Oh, my teacher!" I said to him afterwards, "I didn't know that you taught Piatagorsky." He said, "I didn't. He knew it all already."

Rowell: The third one I love to take is one not so well known. We know him from all his method books for the cello. This was Alvin Schroeder, who produced so many of our books--Two Hundred Cello Etudes and so on. He will tell you, and my encyclopedia over there will say, that he never had a lesson in his life on the cello. He played the viola in the Berlin Symphony, decided he wanted to learn the cello, and never told a soul. He picked it up entirely in private, practiced on it, tried out for the New Berlin Philharmonic and made it on the cello. He soon became their principal cellist. In 1881--he was called to the prestigious Boston Symphony in this country. There was no New York Philharmonic at that time. He remained with the Boston Symphony until 1907. He was with the Kneisel Quartet from 1891 'til 1907, which was the great quartet of all time. He taught at the New England Conservatory and he has published many works. He did all of this without a single cello lesson.

What I tried to do in my way of teaching [was] to go back, see what those players had instinctively, and cultivate those things in my students. It would be like taking a wildflower and cultivating it, if you can see what I mean. They didn't have lots of method books to work from. They worked from something inside themselves that was terribly important in order to get the technique they needed. It is from those people, studying their needs, that I think I got my basic principles.

Riess: But how could you study them? Piatagorsky and Casals didn't do that much verbalizing of it, did they?

Rowell: Oh, no, you just have to--. I can bring out my basic principles for you. There're only about six of them.

Riess: But was it by observing?

Rowell: No. I didn't observe them. I never saw Alvin Schroeder play, most certainly. [pause in tape]

Schroeder compiled etudes from everybody; they weren't all his original ones. He had a whole method of teaching. Casals never had a method of teaching.

I think that what happens is that you begin to find that instead of teaching people how to play with their hands and through their fingers, you begin the other way, too, and see what it is they have inside of them that makes them come out and be a musician. I think that's where I began getting that terrific difference. Instead of beginning with the hands and going back into the body, I begin with the body and mind and come out through the hands.

Riess: We have to really get into that.

Rowell: I would love to get into that because this is my whole feeling of life. You begin at the inside and you go out. [break in tape]

IV RADIO AND TB

The Terrible Hiatus, Tuberculosis

Rowell: There's a big episode in my life which I simply have to bring in here because I can't go on with my teaching until I do. It has such a big part to do with it.

After I got out of college, after I thought I was going to be out a year and then go back for something else, KGO opened and gave us a contract. Then I really played a great deal. I also taught a great deal; I had a studio of my own in Oakland.

I didn't drive in those days and KGO was at 55th Avenue in Oakland. I had to take the streetcar out if I didn't get a ride. That was a long ways out and the streetcar was slow. I had to spend hours on it going and coming, though often Joyce Barthelson, the pianist, who had what we called a "bug" in those days--a little cut down car--would pick me up with my soft cello case and take me out.

KGO in Oakland, and the great big General Electric station in New York, those two were the big broadcasting places in the nation. There was nothing in San Francisco. Later on there were stations, like KGO and KLX. We played for each one of those as they dedicated their opening. There wasn't a radio station around here that we didn't play for for their opening. But KGO was the cream of the crop because it was the only one that had its performing artists on a paid basis.

We played constantly. We'd give a whole hour at noon and another one in the evening. We would be on call for evenings till almost midnight. I would go with my father down to his office, be there by about seven-thirty or quarter of eight in the morning, do my practicing at my studio and then go on out to KGO, every day, then come back and teach and probably not get to bed until

Rowell: almost midnight. I really was leading a life like that and enjoying it tremendously. But I hardly realized that, whereas I had been quite a hefty girl in college--maybe too hefty for the Tri-Delts--I had lost quite a bit of weight. I did go to the doctor quite a number of times with what I thought was a backache, but I didn't complain about it particularly.

One day Joyce Barthelson and I were going to climb Mount Tamalpais the next day, a Sunday. I wasn't feeling absolutely tops and we were right across from my doctor's office. I said, "Oh, I'm going over to my doctor's office." He had taken a X-ray of me about a month or so before. I went over and I said, "I'm thinking of climbing Mount Tamalpais tomorrow." He said, "I haven't looked at those X-rays yet. Wait a minute. I'll go and look at them."

He came back and he said, "Come on in here." He closed his door, and he said, "I just looked at your X-rays and I've got to send you home to bed."

I said, "But I can't do that. The trio has never had a substitute in its life. We can't do that! We're on the air. I have to be there day after tomorrow and broadcast."

He said, "I'm sorry. You're going home and you're going to bed."

I said, "You don't understand. This is broadcasting." He said, "I don't care," and he told me I had tuberculosis.

I went home and called Mr. Bem, my wonderful teacher, and asked him if he had another student. (He had, I thought, some simply marvelous students who had much more training than I had. I can remember several of them right now.) He said, "I'll be right over myself." He came over the next day and for the next six months he was with them.

There I was, laid out in bed. Of all things, I'd never thought of that. Being the healthy, husky brute I was, I never thought of that.

My family was in Glacier National Park that summer, without me, so my cousin from Montana, who was living in Oakland, came over with her husband and stayed with me so that they could bring me my meals. My doctor insisted that I go to a sanitarium and I said I wouldn't leave until my family came home. Of course, I wouldn't write to them and tell them that I was in bed. My mother never got over the shock of it. When she came home and found me

Rowell: there, I don't think she ever really recovered from it. I stayed there until the doctor insisted that I had to go to a sanitarium. They chose a sanitarium down in the hills out of Los Gatos, which they thought would be very nice for me, and it was the worst thing they could possibly have done for me. It was a fine sanitarium. It was a small one, run by a nurse. I loved her. She had only about ten patients. I was out in a little tent in the backyard. The tent suited me fine. But when this great big burly doctor there came to see me the first time--he was Jewish, which I always had enjoyed very much--he found out I didn't have a radio there. (I'd never listened to a radio in my life! I'd never had time to.) He was just shocked. He had heard me play. He said I had to have a radio by my bed.

The family had to bring me a radio and I got to listen in to the Arion Trio every day. Here was Mr. Bem, beautiful player, but if he ever made a mistake--which he did because he wasn't as good a reader as I was and it was a great deal of Joyce's own arrangements, which were just beautiful but in manuscript and therefore much harder to read--if he ever played a wrong note I just absolutely died a thousand deaths right then and there.

Riess: He didn't rehearse with them?

Rowell: Oh, he did rehearse. Of course. But if you are going to give a whole hour's solid program, you would have to have six hours of rehearsal to make it as good as you wanted. We always rehearsed, every day for hours.

Riess: Mr. Bem just didn't have time to rehearse?

Rowell: No, it isn't a question of that. It's just that we played things that we had rehearsed and rehearsed before, and then were playing for maybe the "steenth time" in years.

I had a hard time listening in to the music. Also, it was a very close tent and I was the only one to have a radio of all the patients down there. So they would all congregate in my tent with a much worse TB than mine. I didn't cough. Mine was a TB of the lungs, really more of a pleurisy type of thing. Several of my friends now realize, as I didn't then and my family didn't even, that I was getting a double dose of it every day from all these people coming in, sitting on my bed, coughing and coughing.

Riess: It sounds awful!

Rowell: They did that, just to listen to the music, and on Saturdays they would listen to those games that I wasn't interested in in the least. So I was leading a very strenuous life, not able to get out of bed and yet, there I was. [laughter] That happened for six months. I thought that I was getting better all the time. Of course, nobody took me out to test me with an X-ray or anything. I was supposed to get over it and get back to playing with the trio again.

They finally let me out for a little while. I went down to stay with my sister in San Luis Obispo for a little while and tried to play my instrument. This was just a couple of weeks. I was going to join the girls at Easter for the great big service which was held at the Oakland Auditorium Theatre, which was the biggest place in Oakland. People always came the day before and stayed all night with their lunches and everything to get seats.

On the way home I stopped to see the doctor in San Jose, who had been my doctor at Los Gatos. He was horrified. One lung had collapsed, which would be all right today when they have pneumothorax and sometimes even do it artificially for you. But under these circumstances it was anything but desirable. I didn't realize it until I went back to see him just to get the address of one of the people who had been with me then. Here was that great big doctor humped over his desk and weeping his eyes out. Then I knew.

He said to me, "You go home and you go to bed. You aren't to raise your arms above your shoulders for as long--." That took me two more years. So it was three years altogether that I was out and the poor Arion Trio really suffered during that time.

This is what you have to get in there. The trio really suffered. Mr. Bem was simply marvelous. He was living in Marin County, way out, during the summer when this happened. He took one ferryboat to San Francisco, another ferryboat across to Oakland, and then a long streetcar ride out to KGO, at the beginning to do it. That was really something. After six months of it he couldn't do it anymore, with his heavy load of playing and teaching.

They began trying to get other people to do it and they had a very hard time. There were good cellists, excellent cellists, but they couldn't fit into the trio. They finally found a wonderful girl to fit in, Aurora Cravero. She was lovely. They were really very well satisfied with her. She stayed with them for about two years.

Rowell: I was then back home. No sanitarium after that; that was the worst place I could have been. My mother really took care of me. I think I just about wore her out. I wasn't allowed up, with the bathroom right next to me, for the first year. My mother had to bring the meals up to me. Of course, I listened to the radio all the time.

I might have said that at the Withy Ranch, whereas I was very skinny when I went in there, by the time I came out I was a roly-poly again. I tried to gain back the weight the best possible way I could. I drank mobs of milk and ate all I possibly could. I ate them out of house and home. I think I gained at least thirty pounds in the six months I was there. I looked it.

Riess: This is such a nightmarish repetition of your sister's story, isn't it?

Rowell: That's right. I've never thought of it.

Riess: Your poor mother.

Rowell: Yes. I think she felt quite responsible for not having watched out for me, staying out until midnight every night and being down there. I'd never been ill at all. I'd never had any of the childhood diseases. I'd always been healthy and husky.

Rethinking Life, and Relearning the Cello

Riess: How were your spirits over those few years?

Rowell: At first they were very bad. I remember I came home that day just weeping and weeping, basically because I was letting the other two down so terribly. I just couldn't get over it. Of course, I had no idea it would be three years or I couldn't have done it. After I was adjusted to it, I was all right.

The trio came to see me at least every week, usually a couple of times a week, and brought me everything under the sun. This was 1927 to 1930 just about. This was the plush time of opulence in everything. Even though planes were not so much that time, they would take trips to Los Angeles and buy all the fanciest clothes you ever saw, and broadcast down there. Los Angeles still was not San Francisco, in broadcasting, but they would go down for all sorts of reasons--fly down and back and come in with their fur coats and their gorgeous dresses and all these clothes.

Rowell: I would lie in bed thinking, "What for?" I didn't envy them, I really didn't. I actually learned not to envy them. I didn't read as much as I should have, but I rested a very great deal. I think I must have gotten a foundation fom that. I didn't feel sorry for myself. I just lay there. I think I wasted an awful lot of time. Other people who have gone through similar experiences agree. They all try to make up for it the whole rest of their life and feel that they never have quite made up for it. [laughter]

You lie there absolutely contented. "This is the world, I take it as it comes, this is it." They were running around so fast, putting on all those beautiful clothes--. What for? It really gave me that kind of a feeling. When I'm running around very fast and doing it now, as I do, I always can stop and say, What for? And get back to that other feeling, and know how much of it is artificiality. I think I've hated artificiality ever since then. But the girls were wonderful to me and they showered me with everything under the sun.

Riess: Did you compose at all?

Rowell: No, not at all. I don't think I have any composition in me. I used to think I did. When I handled all the music for the Partheneia, I found out that they had expected that I was going to compose. But no, I got somebody else to do it.

Riess: I thought maybe as you lay in bed--.

Rowell: No. Composition wasn't done as much in those days. Today, everybody composes. I thought that was left for the great people who'd already died. [laughter] You didn't think of people composing in your day and age. You really didn't. That was the day when you were playing everybody else. It was nothing like today with composition on everybody's fingertips.

I think that that affected the whole rest of my life more than anything else ever has.

Riess: In the sense of simplifying?

Rowell: Yes, but also, when they finally tried to get me up to start playing the cello again, it was the most ghastly period of my whole life. Absolutely ghastly! I've never been through anything like it in my life.

The trio, I found out, insisted after three years on saving that place for me on NBC, which was broadcasting to everyplace under the sun. I, listening in and hearing every little tiny

Rowell: thing that I would do differently--every little error that could possibly be, that nobody else would hear--I had the highest standards that I could possibly have. I'd never listened, hearing people play before. I'd never had time. Here I was, super critical of everything and not able to do anything.

I got up. I didn't even know how to hold a bow. That cello was an absolute stranger to me. I didn't know it. I couldn't do a thing. I was in total agony. I called up one of Mr. Bem's marvelous students, who'd gotten the first prize from the Paris Conservatoire, and had her come over. I said, "How do you handle your thumb when you go up?" She said, "I don't know. Look at me." I said, "Well, what did they tell you?" She said, "They never mentioned my thumb to me in my four years there." So, she didn't help me in the least. I just was at odds!

Mr. Bem, my wonderful teacher, merely said to me, "Don't worry. You're going to play better than ever. Don't give it a worry." That was always his attitude.

Then I had another person, who had graduated from the Paris Conservatoire, which was the conservatoire at that time. I had a boy who graduated from there come over and I said, "How do you hold the bow?" He said, "I don't know. Just look at me." I looked at him, saw more or less what he did. I couldn't make the sounds come that I wanted at all. Just absolutely nothing.

So I had to start out with just about five minutes a day of practicing--that was all they would let me--and finally ten minutes and so on. I got no place. The thing that had been my delight was my agony. I couldn't get the tone I wanted, I couldn't get anything I wanted, I couldn't play in tune!

I find now that this comes from being a natural. You don't know what you're doing. You do it the natural way. You can see why this does bear on my teaching. I couldn't find anybody to teach me. I had to teach myself, that was all I could do, and the hardest way possible, by finding out what worked. If anything ever had to come from the inside out, this did.

I think I played abominably. I wouldn't go back to playing because I didn't like anything I did. Finally, what the trio did I can't imagine. Aurora Cravero was one of the sweetest, loveliest and beautiful players and they were happy with her. But the only thing they could do to bring me back was to supply her with a ticket to go back to her beloved Italy, where she had never been, and told me I had to get back in two weeks and play.

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Riess: Your hand was forced.

Rowell: Yes, but I hadn't finished teaching myself, by any manner of means. I was terribly disgusted. I can look over my date book from that year--I have it--and it will say, "Played rotten. Went home and rested." The trio was then on NBC and I had to move to San Francisco, to a little apartment. My family asked me to do that because they knew it would be better for me. It was all very hard for me.

Riess: When you went back, did the announcers and everybody make allowances for you?

Rowell: No. Nobody made any allowances for me whatsoever. In fact, Mr. Bem would say, "You sound just beautiful." Joyce arranged some things right at the very beginning, before Aurora left, for two cellos, where Aurora and myself would be playing together. I remember Mr. Bem saying, "Of course I could hear you. You're so much more beautiful." But I knew I wasn't. Anyway, everybody encouraged me. Nobody ever made any allowances for me whatsoever.

We were on not only our own program, but the Standard School Broadcast, a very fascinating program which we were in charge of and which went on for twenty years, something like that. (The fiftieth reunion was just held of it. They made me come over for it and presented me with a great big huge cake, so big that it took two people to carry it to the car!)

NBC, San Francisco, and KGO, Oakland

Riess: I wish you would describe the whole studio broadcasting set-up.

Rowell: That was interesting. Just recently I read a review saying that the singers and artists of the early days of radio dressed in tuxes and long dresses. This was absolutely true. The studios for NBC in San Francisco were on the top floor of the Hunter-Doolin Building--111 Sutter--and the studios were more than two stories high of solid glass. It would hold probably a hundred and fifty piece chorus and orchestra. The people could sit around on the balcony of that place and look down on you while you played. You would hardly be aware of them. Of course, you had to be dressed. The announcers were just naturally in their tuxes in the day time. There were those formalities. There was a certain wonderfulness about it. It was a world within a world.

Rowell: Our president of General Electric was a remarkable man, the kind of man I could not possibly imagine. One morning we were fidgeting around before we were broadcasting, and we knocked over the big microphone--a beautiful microphone--and dashed it to pieces. The three of us stood there laughing our heads off. The president walked by and he said, "What are you laughing at?" We said, "We've just broken this microphone." I don't know how many thousands and thousands of dollars it was, and he was simply marvelous to us, simply wonderful. I've never forgotten that. It was just one of those things that people do, laugh when they should be weeping.

Riess: In the earlier days of KGO did you get yourselves all dressed for that?

Rowell: No. We didn't get ourselves dressed up as much in those early days. We went in in 1923. That was when they arranged for us, anyway. I've forgotten exactly what day they opened. It might not have been until early 1924. That was just after I had graduated from college and I thought I was going to stay out a year and go back.

We didn't dress up for that at all. I can remember that we spent quite a bit for clothes in those days. I went through a period resenting the fact that we were dressed up when we didn't have to be. I started wearing a middy and skirt outfit to broadcast in, which was the simplest uniform I could think of. A woman came to interview me to take her boy at that time. She didn't take me and I always thought that she thought I wasn't old enough to teach, because I was wearing this middy and skirt.

(I had all the students I could possibly take, and then some, even when I was in college or right afterwards. At that time everybody wanted to take lessons. I had the first cellists of all the high school orchestras around. The young people, I enjoyed taking.)

Riess: Did you have an announcer who would say intelligent things about what the program was that was to follow?

Rowell: Yes. I will bring you lots of those old programs sometime. We were on several programs with KGO. KGO, as I said, was the first station that really paid its people and had really educational programs. The days were given to music and things like that. The evenings were given a great deal to plays. Wilda Wilson Church was a very well-known figure.

Riess: Oh, yes. Thomas Church's mother.

Rowell: What? Really?

Riess: Yes.

Rowell: Well, Wilda Wilson Church, my sakes, the years we worked with her! She would put on the plays out there and, of course, we would have to play between the scenes and each act. I enjoyed those so much. Some times, when she had to have help, for instance with horses galloping at one time, I had to get down on the floor and use two coconut shells and learn to make those horses come along just exactly right. We'd fill in with lots of things like that.

We would be in one studio and they would be in the big studio, acting. We would be all ready when the red light went on--when it was a green light we would be practicing there or doing anything else we wanted--but when the red light would go on, instantly we would have to play. We would do that whatever nights Wilda Wilson Church was on.

One night was educational programs. Those were always ingeresting because we had the professors from UC come out. I would always be listening to them, enjoying everything that went on.

The evening programs were all educational and there was no announcement of any advertisements. I was just telling Frank [tenant and friend] this morning that not until we were on NBC was the great decision made to have an advertisement on. This took so long to decide. Finally they had to take a half minute of some product and that was the beginning of all advertising. Before that the people often paid into NBC, but there was no advertising. I've forgotten whether it was a pill or what it was, but it was something that had to be advertised. There was the greatest discussion whether they should ever say anything over the air.

Riess: How was KGO supported?

Rowell: It was entirely a General Electric station. NBC was partly General Electric. It had those three chimes, and I never realized [goes to piano and plays NBC jingle] these were the chimes, NBC, G E C, General Electric Company. They never said General Electric Company.

Riess: A little "in" joke.

Rowell: Yes. I don't think I ever realized what those three letters were. Of course, NBC took them right on and that was NBC's signing on and off.

Riess: Did you have your own fans? Did you have a lot of identification on this station? Or were you just studio musicians?

Rowell: No, we weren't studio musicians at all. Did we have fans? Yes. We would have so many fans writing. I've thrown away hundreds of letters. I remember one from Australia. How they ever got us over there, I don't know. From Alaska and all over and requesting. Sometimes fifty letters would come in a day and I was supposed to answer them all. [laughter] I think I've gone through my mail and thrown away everything, practically, but we would be loaded with mail.

Of course, they would send us presents, boxes of this and boxes of that and--.

Riess: Proposals of marriage?

Rowell: Oh, I even had that practically. I had two different people, one in Salt Lake City and one in Chowchilla, California. They would both write incessantly to me, and both gentlemen sent me boxes of grapefruit. [laughter]

The people would write so often, and I remember one falling practically in love with our announcer, Jennings Pierce--J. P. he would be called--and getting him to drive all of us someplace the other side of Sacramento where she grew violets, and she fed us lunch. But very seldom did we go out to meet those people like that; that was very unusual. We did get too many fan letters for any use. But the early ones, the one that came from Australia, I was really interested in. They were just amazed that they had gotten us, you see, in those days. That was before NBC even.

Riess: The reason I asked about whether you were studio musicians is, since you were doing those intermission things for Wilda Wilson Church, did you get paid differently for all of this? Or were you just informally doing it?

Rowell: Oh, no. That was part of our job, of course.

Riess: It's not that for that kind of a job you became anonymous, just filling in with music between the acts?

Rowell: No. We were always the Arion Trio. It would say on the program what we would play.

Riess: Did you always have an audience at NBC?

Rowell: No. People would just come in as they did and be around there. I can remember one day seeing this man looking so intensely at us as we played. I thought, "My sakes, he's interested!" I think he stayed at least the whole hour while we played. Then he came up, spoke to me and said, "I'm the vice-president of the Crocker National Bank. I wondered if you know that you've overdrawn?" [laughter]

I said, "No, I didn't." I was absolutely shocked, but I realized that I'd made out a blank check to one of my very dear friends going to New York. I thought he would spend maybe two hundred dollars, but he'd evidently spent something like six hundred dollars and I hadn't known it. When he told me this, I thought that was the loveliest thing, for the vice-president to come and sit through a whole hour of playing! I wish all the vice-presidents did that now.

Careful Programming

Riess: When you went over to that NBC studio, did that mean that you had to get a whole new set of programs? How much of a repertoire did you have to have?

Rowell: We had thousands and thousands of pieces in our repertoire. The thing that was hard was that we had to have our programs made out at least three weeks in advance because they had to be sent to New York and cleared with the publishing companies. We couldn't play anything against certain publishers.

Riess: Because of royalties and things like that?

Rowell: Yes. So we had to have our programs in that long ahead of time. But we had loads and loads of music, so we didn't have to duplicate. The Brahms trios, the Schubert trios, the Haydn trios, the Beethoven trios, and all of those are good for everything. And we were always adding numbers, of course.

Riess: You said in your hotel concerts you often did a lot of short numbers, because that was what people expected, but in the broadcasts, what?

Rowell: The short numbers were really lovely ones. I enjoy them very much to this day. I'm very glad to see that the concert artists are returning to this. For instance, Leonard Rose came out and played just "Du Bist Die Ruh" of Schubert for an encore, and played

Rowell: it just gorgeously. I had always played that. I think that it was either Casals or Popper that arranged that. David Popper, a very great cellist, did a great deal of arranging of these small classical numbers for cello, beside composing them himself. Of course, Casals arranged many of them for cello.

Riess: For your NBC broadcast public, you had basically the same kinds of programs? Or was it "heavier?"

Rowell: No. It was no heavier for them than it had been. It usually contained a movement of a trio in it. It was always classical music and it was always so that it sounded good with three instruments. I think that's the difference between us and others who had to take what was already written for them without arranging the cello part to be a musical cello part.

Riess: Joyce continued doing the arrangements?

Rwoell: Yes.

Riess: Of the group, would you call her the leader?

Rowell: We always felt we didn't have a leader, and I would say we basically didn't. But she would be the leader if there were one. Whether she knew it or not, she really was. I don't think she would have admitted to it, you see. It's very much like a string quartet. The old string quartets used to have the first violinist very much predominating and leading everything. Now, the more they merge together, the better the quartet. I would say that we merged very beautifully, the three of us, and knew how to do it. When one had the melody, we were with them to support them. Then we could take over rather than having the first violin being prominent all the time, as most trio music is written. I don't mean the great trios, but most arrangements have the violin taking the melody and the cello thumping along. We had them equaled and beautifully done.

Riess: Was there any solo work at all? Were there requests?

Rowell: Oh, yes. I remember playing, I think, fifty solos right in succession fifty different days. Not that I didn't sometimes repeat.

Riess: That was part of the program?

Rowell: Yes. Very often.

Riess: Was it an hour or a half-hour program?

Rowell: It just depended. Sometimes it was an hour and a half, sometimes it was an hour.

Leonard Rose, Scared Stiff, but a Perfect Performer

Riess: I wondered whether the fact that you were doing it not for a studio audience, at least at KGO, whether that made it easier for the three of you to perform? Or did you find the stimulus of audience missing?

Rowell: No. That's very peculiar. I don't think the others ever got as nervous as I did. I'm the nervous type when I play. I always got nervous when that mike went down, much more so after I had my bout with TB than before, because now I really heard every single note and every impurity of anything with the others and with myself, and was much more demanding and had less to give, for the whole first time at least.

Riess: But the mike isn't as bad as the audience, or is it?

Rowell: The mike is worse. The mike to me was worse than almost any audience could be. I could be playing just angelically in rehearsal, have them put that mike right down in front of me and I would shiver all over. All I could see was those people in Los Angeles, Spokane and everyplace. I saw all of those suddenly there before me and knew I was on the spot.

Riess: They weren't friendly faces you saw out there. [laughter]

Rowell: Well, it wasn't a matter of friendly. I think they could be as friendly as they wanted. It was whether I could meet their requirements, that's what it was. I find that today. I think that the more artistic a person is the less sure he is that he can give all that he has to give. When he falls short he falls way short, when the audience may think he's okay.

I find that right now. Leonard Rose, who I think is one of the finest cellists we've ever produced, solo cellist of the New York Philharmonic for years and so highly regarded. I went back to the Rostropovich Cello Congress in June. There were four hundred cellists from all over the United States. All the great cellists were there, the whole band of United States cellists. They were all sitting in the front row. I was sitting in about the fourth row, behind all these cellists.

Rowell: Leonard Rose was giving the entire recital, the only cellist there to give an entire concert. I've known his playing for years. He's very fine, perhaps too perfect a player. (Casals is not too perfect a player. Casals can make mistakes.) He's never listened to a record he's made himself. He'll never listen to anything because he says, "That's the way I am."

Leonard Rose corrects himself down to the nth degree and then, when he finally gets it, he plays it like that, usually a hundred times exactly the same. This is done exactly there, this is done there. It doesn't get the freedom that Casals gives to his playing. So, it's absolute perfection. When you've heard him play the same composition ten times, as I often have, it's played exactly the same and you almost wish that he would do something a little bit different.

This time he outplayed himself. Every single composition that he played went someplace and did something to you. I never have heard better playing in my life. His Brahms was pure Brahms; his Schumann was pure Schumann; his Schubert was pure Schubert. Everything was just right there. He got a terrific ovation, such a great ovation that Rostropovich jumped up on the stage and kissed him and kissed him.

When he came out for an encore, Leonard Rose said, "I won't play an encore unless Slava will play my accompaniment." (I don't call him by any nickname. I refuse to. Rostropovich.) So he had to sit down and play, of all things, the Faure "Elegy." He did very well. He made quite a few mistakes with his piano part; I could tell that they hadn't practiced together. But it was very delightful. Of course, Leonard Rose played it absolutely perfectly.

When it was all through I saw Leonard right afterwards. He came and threw his arms right around me and said, "Oh, Margaret, I was scared stiff every second." I thought this was perfectly wonderful. This really carried a great principle to me. He was scared stiff every minute, so he was absolutely standing on his toes and throwing himself into it. But he knew the music so well--he knew what he wanted to do--so it was the medium and he was inspired. I'd heard him play so often when he had played the music, but that ended it. This time the music was playing him and he was playing right through it. The difference was amazing to me, and everybody caught it.

Mother's Last Years##

Rowell: The Crash of 1929. I remember that, first seeing all this opulence, then--.

Riess: You weren't that drastically affected?

Rowell: Our family was not, but most certainly the families around me were. To see that great change come over the world was really something. When I came back [from my illness], people were not getting, perhaps, as big wages as they did, even though we in the trio were at NBC.

I mentioned going to Alaska with my father. I don't think that I went ahead to say that a year later I went to the South Seas. (My father then was on a trip around the world, with Marion.)

Riess: When did your mother die?

Rowell: That was 1933.

Riess: Was your illness such a shock to your mother that she never really got over it?

Rowell: Oh no. She did get over it. I don't think that was true at all. My mother was taken ill, and it was her heart. That is what I would think that perhaps I'd blame on myself. My sister has laid blame on herself. I think everybody in the family thinks that they have.

What really happened to her was that she did have a slight stroke behind one eye and lost sight of her eye. This was just when I was getting well. I had the great joy of taking care of her. It was really a joy, combing her hair every day and getting her all fixed up. She was sure she wasn't going to get well and I was sure she was. And she did. She not only got well, but she'd always done all the work of sewing, cooking and doing everything and never had any help in the house. She had decided then that she would have help. We had a school girl come in and help us in the afternoon.

My mother blossomed into something so beautiful after she was seventy that I have never seen anything more beautiful in any human being. I helped her get long, black evening dresses in San Francisco. She loved to wear my clothes. We wore just about the same size. We could wear each other's shoes and dresses.

Rowell: She was president of the Women's Club of Plymouth Church in Oakland, which had a large women's club. She'd always been literary. They had a play, and if they didn't give her one of the leading parts in that play! She had to be a young person in the beginning and she wore my clothes. She did her part up like anything!

She would put on her best evening clothes and go out with my father in the evening. Those last two years of her life were sheer joy to her, and to me. I've never seen anybody enjoy living the way she enjoyed those years.

A Trip to the South Sea Islands with the Trio, 1934

Riess: Then you had the South Seas trip?

Rowell: We often played many places where we had singers accompanying us, fine singers who were soloists on NBC. The Athens Club of Oakland was one. There was a whole, great big Athens Building and they served a Sunday evening dinner that was something. They had us, and published the program every week in the Tribune as to what we would play. We always had a soloist, one of the NBC singers.

Miriam Sellinger was one of them--a very fine soprano. Her husband was vice-president of Matson Lines, which was the line that ran to Hawaii and the South Seas. Mr. Sellinger's two sisters were teaching in the Oakland school department under my Dad. So, they had us up for dinner one night. I sat next to Mr. Sellinger and I said, "You know, I think you're awfully foolish. You send those boats out and you either have your jazz players try to play classical music, or you have your classical musicians try to play jazz. It's perfectly ridiculous! I don't see why you can't have both of them and have something like the trio."

I didn't think anything of it at the time. I was really sort of kidding him. But in less than two weeks he called me at my apartment in San Francisco and said, "How would you like to go to the South Seas? I'd like to send my wife (who was the great soprano singer for NBC) and have her sing and have the trio play. It would be a cruise." (That's something they do now, you know, all over Europe, cruises with musicians aboard.)

The trio wasn't at all excited about going because here we were on NBC, and had so many programs on NBC. But I thought that would be wonderful! Finally we arranged it. NBC was really furious at us. They said they had to make, I think it was, eighty-five changes in their program when we left. They said they didn't know whether we could count on anything when we got back.

Rowell: We were gone just about three months. It was that long. We didn't count on what we were doing. Again, I think they [the trio] enjoyed me enough so that they listened to what I said. Of course, I thought it was just marvelous to be going We did have a wonderful time.

That trip came just at the time of the great big strike, which everybody has heard about, in San Francisco. That would be the time of Harry Bridges.

Riess: The general strike, right [1934]?

Rowell: Yes. It happened before we left, and San Francisco was in complete strike as we were ready to leave, so the boat had to board passengers in Los Angeles, which was not as union as San Francisco. We took a train down, and the train had to go in absolute darkness out to the pier, and we had to get on the boat in darkness, at night, without lights as I remember, and slide out of the dock. It was very exciting.

Because of that all the help on board was non-union. This made the trip the funniest trip you've ever been on. Of course, all the passengers were there. I had always gotten seasick, even on the bay, and part of the trip was very rough. Some of the time the three of us, the trio, were the only people in the dining room. The help wasn't there! [laughter] The help was seasick, because they weren't used to it!

We did get to some of the very unusual islands, but it took us so long to get everyplace! We went to Tahiti and Pago-Pago. Beautiful, beautiful. We went swimming there, where all the little tiny fish were so bright and colored underneath. I loved to swim under the water at that time and see all the schools of fish, not just one, but all of them, the little blue fish and the orange fish and the yellow fish, all intermingled right while you were swimming. I was very excited. I loved the natives and I loved all their things.

Some of the people on board ship were very remarkable. The head steward had gone to Oxford. He was fascinating. He and the doctor had us almost every evening for cocktails before dinner. The steward had seen that everything for the doctor was on board. They'd been on together before. The doctor wanted plenty of caviar, plenty of this and that. So we were really dined every night.

The fellow who had been to Oxford had majored in architecture and archaeology and had loads of stories to tell. (He was very much attracted to our violinist, Frances Shorr.) The conversations

Rowell: between the doctor, who was very well read in everything, and this steward and ourselves, were fascinating. I don't think we lost a moment in trivialities.

Riess: A dream trip.

Rowell: I remember when we came to Samoa and we wanted to go in and buy the beautiful things, the Oxford man would have a fit because people would bargain with the Samoans so much.

I had one of the most beautiful dresses, a dress I had made myself. It was an organdy dress with all the finest tucking you would ever see in your life. I'd spent hours making hundreds and hundreds of these fine little tucks. I don't know why I was ready to give it away, I can't imagine why, but he thought it was wonderful to give them things, you see, things that they would really treasure, so I gave this away for absolutely nothing! [laughter] He thought that people were getting the better of them, and I brought back almost nothing. What I did bring back I remember putting on the bed and my friends coming, and within two days everything was gone except a little bit of tapa cloth. That's all I preserved from anything, because I wouldn't "take advantage" of the South Sea Islanders!

But it was a wonderful, wonderful trip. We stopped where Robert Louis Stevenson was buried, and then Nuka Hiva, which was an island people very seldom visited, the one where Gauguin painted so much, and died I believe. A very uninhabited island. Completely native to this day.

This was a cruise, so it could do what it wanted to, except that we were very much behind time because of the strike and starting so late. We were supposed to have gone to Australia and New Zealand and we never hit them at all. New Caledonia was the last place we stopped south. It is very close to Australia.

I had letters of introduction and had to get off the boat early because Dr. Thomas Goodspeed of the Department of Botany at the University of California, and Dr. [William A.] Setchell, who was such a famous man in the botany department, and I've forgotten who the third one was, came to my front door with all these things they wanted me to collect, so I had to get off.

Riess: The nicotiana.

Rowell: That's right.

Riess: Did you play concerts for the natives at all?

Rowell: No, not for the natives. We never had our instruments off the boat. But we came back to Hawaii and there the people on board who were from Hawaii had telegraphed ahead and made the radio station put us on there. The people entertained us and did a great deal for us there. Otherwise, no.

Peculiarly enough, we each one did what we wanted. The other two of the trio didn't necessarily want to go to Robert Louis Stevenson's grave as I did, and other people didn't want to do some of the other things that I did.

I loved to see the natives. When we got to Tahiti it was real natives. I mean, without any clothes on at all. We would go around the countryside and see them climbing up those coconut trees and everything like that. I don't think it would be like that now. The canyons lined with wild oranges I think interested me, too, and the outline of those mountains, such precipitous mountains. I loved a great deal of it, yet I have never wanted to go back on a long ocean voyage again, never had any desire to because it was too long for me. People seem to love the quietness of an ocean voyage, but I got plenty of it.

I mentioned meeting a very great doctor who was on board ship with his wife. I would sit by the hour and talk to him. I had had my tuberculosis at that time and [was] all over it. When he found it out, he was just fascinated because he was going along to study the natives and what our culture, eating habits and everything, were doing to us. He had gone before and he was seeing what our flour and sugar was doing to them. He was finding out plenty, with both their teeth and their digestions and everything else. He would get off the boat early and go and take his pictures and develop them. He thought that if I could only get to Switzerland and get the Swiss milk and be in those mountains--everybody thought milk and those things would cure you of tuberculosis in those days.

I drank so much milk when I had my tuberculosis. I drank quarts of it every day and I ate everything that they put in front of me. But I've found out now that I'm allergic to milk. I just know that it was because I took my fill of it. Of course, I think they've found out that it's no better than anything else for you. But in those days they thought that green grass and the high mountains and milk would cure you.

This man was fascinating with his work on diet and all that. He brought out a wonderful book. I saw his book referred to long after that every place, in magazines. He had great debates in Washington with people over the diet, because he found out how

Rowell: important diet was when we were just ruining the starving people by sending them our sugar and white flour. It was he who first told me that not even bugs could live on white flour and refined sugar, and that is why it has become the staple food to send everywhere!

Riess: Which of the Matson Line ships were you on?

Rowell: The Los Angeles. Not a fancy ship at all. But what they gave us! I can see their way of doing it. You remember Mr. Sellinger's wife was on board. Of course, she had a beautiful room. But because their finest rooms don't sell as much, because they cost so much, we had two whole big rooms with a big salon in between, and a huge bathroom. We had by far the best accommodations on board the ship.

Of course then we took trunks along. People don't travel with trunks anymore, but we each had our great big trunk with our clothes in it.

Riess: Did you get paid in addition to the trip?

Rowell: Very little. We had to be paid a little bit.

Riess: The union was--?

Rowell: I've forgotten why we had to be paid a little bit. But it was not the pay that counted, at all.

When we were out in the mid-Pacific was when we found out how bad the general strike really was and that the strike had really hit home and NBC had closed down, or practically closed down. I think I told you everybody brought food for everybody else. Or didn't I?

Riess: No.

Rowell: Well, there were no restaurants in San Francisco open. There was nothing open during the strike. Everybody knew that everybody else was starving, so everybody made their own bread and everything else at home and brought it for everybody. So, everybody had too much to eat! [laughter]

We got back to NBC and found out that everything had changed. They fired almost everybody. They fired their whole orchestra. We were not fired, but there was almost no place for us. They fired most of their singers. It was practically the close down of NBC. It went ahead a little bit after that, but they never had another trio or sustaining group as we were. Really the general strike changed every thing.

Across the Bay in 18 Minutes, with Cello

Rowell: When I came back I had my apartment in San Francisco, but then we weren't on NBC. So I moved to Sausalito. I got a place over there.

I enjoyed it tremendously. It was a large apartment with a porch out in front. I looked right straight out over the bay. I could run right down and get on the ferry boat and go to San Francisco. Of course, there was no bridge.

Riess: So you moved there for the beauty?

Rowell: For the beauty of the place, yes.

If I remember correctly I had a very large living room, a nice bedroom, a huge kitchen and this porch. I think I paid fifteen dollars a month for it.

Riess: Golly! But then you had to commute all the way over to Oakland for some of your teaching, too?

Rowell: Yes. We broadcast then. KLX in Oakland took us right on. I went to KLX every night and back, for quite a long while. I finally gave that up and came on to my family's home, where I hadn't been since I'd left in 1930, after my TB. I came and lived at home.

Riess: We've covered a lot of ground and I'd like to stop in a minute. But this does seem like a good place for you to tell the story of your amazing timing on your Sundays.

Rowell: Thank you for asking me. I do love to tell about it because it does seem to interest people so much, and yet we took it absolutely for granted at that time.

We had always given the main afternoon program on NBC Sunday. That was our big show piece. We played and we usually chose a fine singer as our assistant artist for the hour. We had done that since the opening of NBC. It was probably our biggest audience of the week.

Then came those stations in New York, when they could get through out here, which they had never done up to that time--sometimes we'd broadcast back there, but very seldom--but when they could broadcast here, when [Walter] Damrosch could come on

Rowell: and conduct and have his program heard out here on Sunday afternoon, of course that replaced us. Yet they didn't want to give us up, so they insisted on putting us on in the morning.

Well, for years and years we had played for a church in Oakland. The Home of Truth it was called, and it met in Ebell Hall, which was a lovely big hall in Oakland. I remember the mayor of Oakland was one of its main members. It had a very elite audience, always packed. Easter and the main services were held in the Oakland Auditorium theater.

We always had to wear evening dresses there. The minister was a woman who always wore an evening dress. She was quite a speaker, really quite remarkable. We had played there for years and here we told her that we didn't see how we could do it. "Well, that was impossible! She had to have us!" So, we worked it out, and it worked out very well.

NBC gave us the morning broadcast, ten to eleven in the morning, which was a very good hour. But we had to sign off at eleven and get to the Oakland service. The way we did it was, we signed off on the twenty-first floor of 111 Sutter Building. The elevator was waiting for us up at the top. We went down to the first floor and we had a taxi waiting for us. We went down to the Ferry Building. Before we got there we could hear the chug, chug, chug of the amphibian plane with great big rubber tires, in the water. We'd walk out on the pier and get right into it and it would start up and go over what's now Yerba Buena Island--called Goat Island at that time--and land at the Alameda Naval Air Base. One of our fathers would be there to meet us in a car. In the back seat would be our evening dresses. We would race through the Alameda Tube to the Ebell Hall, get out there, put on those evening dresses, and come out and play the offertory.

I had to call Joyce within the last three weeks and she actually confirmed that it was never later than 11:18, usually a little bit earlier, that we walked out on that platform. I don't know how we did it. I simply don't see. With our bridges now and going as fast as we do. I've gone eighty miles an hour on that bridge, taking Bonnie and Nate [Nathan Schwartz] to the airport, but I don't think I could count on it. But we were never late, back then.

Riess: Your fathers were part of this? You couldn't just get another taxi at the other end?

Rowell: It never occurred to us! We had a taxi in San Francisco, but San Francisco was totally different. It is that way to this day; you can get a taxi on a moment's notice, almost, in San Francisco. But try to get one in Berkeley or Alameda! You just have to wait and wait. You can't get one.

Riess: I must say, that is a good story. Do you realize it's after one o'clock?

Rowell: Oh, no. What's today? Monday. When do I teach? I don't know.

Riess: I think we're stopping right now.

Rowell: All right. I think we are.

V TEACHING CELLO

[Interview 4: October 4, 1982]##

Ingredients: Motivation, Intelligence, Triumph

Riess: You were starting to say why you couldn't say, "No" to a student with a problem.

Rowell: I love to teach, but I feel that if a student comes and plays quite well, and seems talented and everything, there are so many people who can teach a person like that, because they'll go right ahead for them. But if they have very serious problems, and yet love the cello, I just have to take them.

It would be very much like a doctor having a patient come. If the patient seems quite well he can pass him on to somebody else; if it's not an important operation, somebody else can do it. But if he sees something that really demands his attention, and he thinks he's capable of handling that person, he ought to take him. He can't turn him over to somebody else, he just doesn't feel it's right to.

So I have ended up a lot of times with an awful lot of "problem teaching." Of course, I think I've learned more from my problem students than from my most talented students.

Riess: More about teaching, you mean?

Rowell: Yes. I always would say, "I thank God for my talented students because they give me so much pleasure. But I learn the most from my slow students." It's with the really slow students, where you see the things happening as if they were under a microscope, that you really learn whether you're doing the thing that's going to produce results, or not.

Riess: Why are the slow students even motivated?

Rowell: Oh, they are so motivated! I have never seen anything like the love of that instrument by people who have not got the talent to play it, but the love of it! It happens over and over. You just have to pull them along.

I had one student who came every week at least by seven-thirty in the morning. She came over a period of twelve years, I would say. Her love of the cello was terrific. She could go to concerts--she was a marvelous musician--and she could criticize the players, and criticized them correctly, but she could not play in tune, and she could not bring out a good melody. I would work and work with her. I finally achieved some results with her. But lose interest? Never for a moment! She would be right there on my front steps and come in and her face would gleam so.

Riess: You are unlike some teachers who would say that the first principle is to have some talent.

Rowell: Oh, yes. Everybody says that. Everybody gives their students terrific examinations to see whether they can accept them or not. The only thing I ask them is that they really love the cello. If I find out that it's just the parents wanting them to start, once in a long while I've taken them, but usually against my better judgment. I can sometimes pull them along until they get that interest in the instrument. But it's always a pleasure to teach a person who has that love of the instrument.

Riess: How about the age?

Rowell: I've changed my mind about the age a great deal. Of course, I've always said that age made no difference whatsoever. I think I got this partly from my father. I mentioned that when I was still in high school he would take me out to visit the night classes, and I would see those immigrants trying to learn English, I would see these people going out at night to learn everything. He was one of the few who felt clear back in the twenties and before, even, that adults could learn. Nobody thought they could. You stopped learning at age twenty-five. I think I was just inbred with the idea that there was no stopping point.

So, I used to take more real adults and start them than I do now, even. I think I mentioned to you a professor who came out from Harvard in the summer. Did I mention that at all?

Riess: No.

Rowell: A perfectly charming professor, George Wald. He hadn't yet gotten his Nobel Prize, or I guess maybe he had. What he did in one summer at age fifty-two was, to me, absolutely amazing: he was playing a beautiful Vivaldi sonata with vibrato and everything by the end of the summer. I was simply thrilled with what he accomplished. But he had to learn to make the body the thing through which the music came, and not play his exercises out there with his fingers.

I was surprised when he came back a couple years later and gave a big lecture at Grace Cathedral, which was packed jammed with standing room only. Of course, it was on the peace situation. All the young people were crowded in there. I'd gone very early and parked, and finally got a seat somewhere. Afterwards I went up. The crowd was all around him. I was standing way, way back. Finally he saw me. He came up, threw his arms around me in front of the crowd, turned me around and said, "This is my cello teacher." [laughter] I remember that moment very well.

So, it is that kind of experience that you can have with an adult.

Riess: I should think that with a lot of adults you must have the experience of dealing with so much of the intellect. They want to know the reasons why, and they want to discuss.

Riess: Well, yes and no. I would say it's getting an interflexibility of the mind and body which is so exciting with an adult.

But with a child, I used to say often that I wanted them to have at least a year of piano before they came to cello. I found out it helped them so much in being able to read music and also to see that scale out in front of them. If they haven't had piano I always take them to the piano first and sit them down there, and do a major scale myself. Very simple. Just those white keys right straight up. Show them where the half-steps come. Then they can build their own scales all over the piano, so that they can see the relationship of the intervals and have that clearly in the mind. I think it helps so much.

I've always said I wanted them about nine years of age. Renie, who I've taught for twenty years, starts youngsters at the very early ages. Four has probably been her earliest age, though she's taken a three-year-old, and done beautifully.

She is able to take them slowly at the beginning, which they need. We don't realize that. When they learn very, very fast as a youngster they're still going slowly compared to an adult.

Rowell: An adult gets frustrated. If it took an adult two years to learn what a child learns in the first two years, we would think they were very, very slow. But the child learns so beautifully if you can take them on those slow steps, and really know what those slow steps are, and keep them musically alive, with melodies and with music. We seem to feed them raw bran for the first two years and expect them to like food when they get it. They can just as well be using music rather than the horrible pages of open strings and uninteresting music.

Riess: An adult who didn't have a good ear, it would be such an uphill battle.

Rowell: No. I still say, if they love the instrument, I couldn't give them up. Because I think the ear can be cultivated. In this one instance there was an obstinacy, and yet I knew the ear was good because of the musicality of the person. I think anybody can learn to play fairly well. I wouldn't say I think that person is going to be a great artist. But I do think that if they can learn to play chamber music beautifully--string quartets and trios--for the rest of their lives in their own homes, that has met my goal.

When I was back in Washington this last June, at the Rostropovich National Cello Congress, I was rather horrified at a discussion when the only thing that was considered was what kind of a living they could make out of it. That was the discussion among the great teachers, they didn't want to take any student who wasn't going to be a professional and bring them credit.

Riess: Bring the teacher personal credit?

Rowell: Yes. Well, they didn't say it in that way, but they would not accept any student who was not going to be a professional. And the whole of that particular thing fell on how soon you could recognize that a person was not going to be a professional, so you would not encourage them any more.

Now, some of our finest amateur players are beautiful players. They are really beautiful! I remember a former student of mine came out about a year ago. His family phoned ahead and said they wanted to play string quartets at my home one evening. He had graduated from Harvard. He hadn't taken lessons since he was in high school, but he was the first cellist at Harvard, and he'd gone on and he was raising a family.

I didn't invite anybody in for the evening because I didn't know how he was going to play. But the music that came out of that cello! I could not believe it! The string quartet playing

Rowell: that evening was of the highest calibre possible. When they got into the very, very difficult Brahms and Schubert, I wondered how he would do. The ensemble was simply amazing, for four players, bringing them together. I said, "How did you do it? Have you been taking lots of lessons?"

He said, "Not at all. I learned so much from playing chamber music. I watch the others. I watch the violinist. I try to get my bow to match his exactly. I try to do this; I try to do that." Well, I was just absolutely bowled over. He hadn't had any more lessons, but he would be a pleasure for any artist anywhere to play with. I couldn't believe it. But that happens over and over.

I get back to the same point. You can take lessons from the most expensive teachers under the sun, and the finest teachers, but unless you can teach yourself, you just don't learn. Nobody can teach you something that you don't really learn yourself, whether it's the English language or anything else.

Riess: Would you think that cello playing demands a very great degree of intelligence, then?

Rowell: Let me just say there are so many different kinds of intelligence that I have yet to find out what it is. I'm absolutely amazed and stumped by it all the time. Each person I take is totally different. That's the most wonderful thing.

I say that we play from the inside out, and I do not teach the person what to play from the outside, I don't even tell them what literature they have to study. I have to see them develop. I try to make up my own exercises for them, for what's the matter with them--just like finding out what's the matter with you and giving you a pill that I've devised myself, if I could, for that particular purpose--rather than assigning them mobs and mobs of études which, if they learn them all by heart, they'll finally know how to play something. That's from the outside in and you haven't answered what is really keeping you from being your whole self and playing that instrument, with your full brain, of course. But it's so much more than intelligence.

I love to think of children with the songs inside of them. You don't ask whether a wonderful black native in Africa is born with intelligence when he bursts out singing, or a Hindu in India when he's going along the trail, or anything like that. It is an inborn thing. To bring that out of them, and have it come through their hands--the brain and the hands are the closest connected, much more than the brain and the mouth--when you have that, it's much more than intelligence.

Rowell: And I think it's much more human than intelligence. It's almost a cliche to say that music is a universal language. But I do think when it comes to weddings and funerals and graduations--

Riess: Celebrations.

Rowell: Celebrations, yes, that music is the thing that you use and not words.

Riess: Yes. For most people, so much of their life has been directed by the intellect, it must be, for some of them, a great awakening to go through this with you. They must fight it up to a certain point; you must have to go through something with them.

Rowell: Yes. I suppose so. I think that's part of what I enjoy. As I said, if it's a hard case, then I can't turn them away. It fascinates me.

I take the Science Newsletter. I'm fascinated by the doctors and the scientists looking through microscopes and finding out things that you never knew before. And, I might say, looking through telescopes, too, which is the opposite. Those two things just absolutely fascinate me.

I don't think I teach a person anything. I think it's them finding themselves. If there's anything I would call my secret--and I don't call it a secret--it would be that I say, "Playing cello is from the brain ear to the fingertip, without interference." Most people, and most adults, have a great deal of interference there. It may be physical. It may be muscular. So often it's in the shoulder socket. It's so often in the elbow socket that hasn't opened up. They would do it in tennis in a moment. But in cello playing they think they have to sit in a certain position and move their arms back and forth, instead of having their arms move even much more from a flexible back than a tennis player's. But they forget all about it.

I have a little eleven-year-old student I've been teaching. She's very talented. The last few months she's disappointed me very much. She can play every note I give her, and play them well, but the music that she used to have is not there. She was going to try out for something. Just two weeks ago tomorrow, I had her here and I said, "Well, you're going to try out for that. I can tell you you simply do not get what I want. You are not getting the tone you used to have and, somehow, you refuse to get it. I cannot teach it to you. You're the only one who can do it."

Rowell: I tried this, I tried that, I tried the other thing. I finally had her standing up and crouching and playing her cello standing up. And she began to get the kind of a tone I want, which I call the positive-negative, using lots of the negative pull; rather than thinking that you push your bow out in front of you, you're pulling it right into the very center of your body.

She came back this last Tuesday, and I never heard such quality come out of her! I couldn't believe it. I was really aghast! It was absolutely unbelievable. I said, "What did you do?"

She said, "Oh, I just stood up and played the way you told me to."

I said, "But listen to that. Now you're playing from the inside out."

She said, "Yes."

Along with the huge tone was all the gradations of quality. Before, it had been a monotone playing, which most people play. But here she really had the quality down. Everything came. I said, "Is that any harder?"

She said, "No. Of course it's easier."

That was a real breakthrough in just one week's time. It was from zero to one hundred, I would say. So, that does happen.

[break in tape] [returns with letter]

Gerard Leclerc and Ron Crutcher

Rowell: I've had an interesting experience with my teaching. It sometimes comes in a most roundabout way.

I taught a student the last couple of years of his playing at the [San Francisco] Conservatory [of Music], who needed a great deal of help. He was almost falling to pieces, I would say. Maybe he wouldn't like my using that expression. He was always so nervous that he would fall apart when he was playing a solo in public, let me put it that way. I worked with him trying to give him this centering feeling, feeling that his full playing was coming into himself.

Rowell: He did give a perfectly beautiful senior recital. He couldn't find anybody at the conservatory to play piano with him, they are always so busy. So he gave a completely unaccompanied recital, which was one of the first ones ever given, on the most difficult pieces written for the cello: the Kodaly unaccompanied in all its movements, the Bach E-flat Major Suite in its six movements, and the Benjamin Britten thing--I've forgotten how many movements there are to that. Those three things he did absolutely superbly.

A few days after that, maybe a week, he was in the hospital almost gone from diabetes. He was there for about a month or so. Before that time he had played in a master class for Pierre Fournier, who was at the conservatory, from Switzerland. Fournier had been very much impressed with his playing. So, as soon as he graduated he got up and went right over to Switzerland, where he studied with Pierre Fournier for about a year, and immediately got a job as first cellist and solo cellist of a chamber music group in Switzerland, where he's still playing.

He has always been an exponent of this teaching of mine, and always carries it out to everybody else. He's the one that made me come over to Switzerland two years ago. Then he had another cello teacher come down from Germany to see me and so on.

It was he who told Ronald Crutcher about my playing. Ron Crutcher heads the cello department at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. He [Crutcher] called me and said that he had received, from the University of North Carolina, a grant to go into my teaching. His project was "The Mind's Own Instrument: The Creative Teaching of Margaret Rowell." I had never met him. He engaged me to come back and give a week's workshop at the University of North Carolina, from morning 'til night every day. (Of course, I insisted on taking Renie Sharp back with me.) I met him for the first time at the Rostropovich National Cello Congress, which I'll have to tell you more about, which was in Washington, D.C. in June. Nobody had mentioned to me that he happened to be a black. A beautiful, dark black with a beautiful face.

That was the beginning of June that I was there, and it was the last of June when we came back home, and then went to North Carolina and had that week of teaching. He had brought together people from I can't tell you how many states in the union. There were fifty-four teachers.

I flew directly from there to Pomona College, where I taught at the National Cello Institute for a week, and then came on home. Ron Crutcher came out to Pomona and watched me teach there for that week. Then he came right on up here and spent two weeks here, and I had about twelve of my students come in and play for him.

Rowell: At the end of it all he said, "Now you've got to give me a little bit of work." I only spent a little bit of time with him, but the letter right there is from the work that I did with him. I just thought that it was very interesting.

Riess: He is writing a book?

Rowell: No. He called it a project. I don't know what it's going to be myself. I haven't any idea, and I'd just as soon not know. I don't know when he'll ever have it done. In fact, I put a card in the mail to him the other day.

Riess: This letter is from someone who was one of his teachers.

Rowell: I must have met this person at the Rostropovich National Cello Congress.

Riess: She says that Ron Crutcher formerly had a troublesome unevenness which was very upsetting, etc., etc. [reading]

> "No more. I rushed back stage and asked Ron, 'What did she say? What did you do?' His response was wonderful. In a very relaxed manner and with a gentle smile he said, 'She said to use a little negative energy, and then she showed me how to use the joints of my fingers as springs.' To me, the key words were negative energy. They told me you had a deep understanding of our young friend," and so on. "You have given him something very precious and special and we are very grateful."

Margaret Rowell's Sense of the World of Rhythms and Flexibility

Riess: "Negative energy" you started to explain when you were talking about your young student. It is a disconcerting phrase, from you.

Rowell: [laughter] I think I like it for that. People are always telling me I'm too positive, you see, yet I don't consider myself an extrovert, I consider myself entirely an introvert, and people who know me well, I think, think I am an introvert. It's very interesting.

I've always thought in opposites. People sometimes say, "Oh, Margaret, I wish you wouldn't talk about opposites." But I think of the whole world made up that way. I just see day and night, man and woman, black and white. We wouldn't have any newspapers

Rowell: without them [laughing], not that they're so great. Water and steel, and water and rock. All these things as opposites, and yet they're so necessary to each other. Water and rock can't be so separated; it's the very water action on rock that gives us everything we have.

Riess: It is not a matter of setting up a dichotomy so that you can choose between one and the other?

Rowell: Not at all. They have to work together. I think that we're in such a mathematical world right now, such a bound-by-the-straight-line world. The straight line is everything, whether in building a building or anything else. Well, I don't see it!

##

Rowell: I can remember sitting down with my brother, who was a wonderful man, and he would explain things about the earth in rotation for me. He had to do it over almost every year because my mind didn't always retain it. This morning, getting up and seeing how dark it was when I got up compared to what it was a month ago, I could hardly believe it. That length of the day was exciting to him. We would be in a restaurant or something and he would draw it out on a paper napkin for me, showing me the difference of the curves of those days. At one time of year, the day stays exactly the same; the sun sets at exactly the same second for several days, while at the other end it begins to lengthen or shorten. Then, as you get around the curve the other way, it changes. I never thought of the days staying exactly the same, but they do--but not really, because the other end is giving.

And then, the fact that there really are not just the 365 days to the year, that we have to stick in an extra day once in a while--but even that isn't enough. Other people, who keep an absolutely exact calendar, have a totally different calendar than ours. Even the 365 days don't make it, because the twenty-four hours a day isn't quite right.

We go all the way through nature thinking that we have the mathematical answers, when we don't. Nature itself is so flexible. I get excited by it, really, very excited by it.

I think we show that [flexibility] in our buildings where, when we do build them as we do our Transamerica Building, out of stuff, we have to have the glass so that it is no longer the kind of glass that doesn't give. It has to give. My students who go down and play there tell me that the bottom of the building is on rollers that give as much as something like thirty feet, I believe. They roll around there while they're playing. Did you know that? I'm just amazed.

Rowell: This earth of ours is flexible, and we have to have flexibility. But in music we've come through a lot of music where the beat is the whole thing and it has to be that exact way instead of, as Bruno Walter had it, with the beat right there, but like the day, you didn't notice, you hardly knew which end of it gave. There was that little bit of give, yet there was that absolute rhythm that kept right on going.

Riess: Those are a lot of concepts. Positive and negative--and flexibility mediates between the two. But tell me, what is negative energy in cello playing.

Rowell: I'd never thought of that expression until I got it here [in this letter]. I don't think I ever used the expression in my life, negative energy. It's probably Ron's interpretation of what I do.

Using the Back in Playing the Cello

Riess: You talked about negative bowing.

Rowell: He didn't say bowing.

Riess: Well then, would you explain what you said for the little girl?

Rowell: What I told her to do was to get up and play in a standing position because then, suddenly, what happens is that your back and your spine become the center and not those two arms flailing out at the sides, as everybody has them.

Everybody thinks that your arms play the cello--your left arm fingers it and your right arm bows it. But just try to do it without your spine and it's something very insipid. You can have your arms very strong, with all the muscles in them working, but that doesn't give you what you have to have to play the cello, which is a whole back that is as flexible as a swimmer's back, as an athlete's back. Even more so. An athlete can get by with big muscles; a cellist cannot.

A cellist is much more like a ballet dancer, who has to train and train. You don't see the bulging muscles on your lovely feminine dancers, and neither do you in a cello player. In fact, I think a very interesting thing is that the women who play the cello and get the biggest tones have the least muscles showing in their arms.

Rowell: Joanna de Kayser was a beautiful cellist in the Casals master class. I think she was one of the favorites. She played the Dvořák concerto like nobody, with the hugest tone you ever heard! Wow! And her arms were like broomsticks, from exactly where they came out of her shoulder. She was as skinny as they made them, yet everything worked through. You could see that back working.

This amazed me, and yet it didn't, even at that time, because I used what I call the "baby clutch." Anybody can hold the baby up, but to see it use clinging, suction hands so that it pulls itself up, that ability of that whole body to pull it up and down, is simply amazing.

It's that flexibility, really, of a very young child that we are after. (Maybe that is the reason why it always has been presumed that you had to start young, because you had that flexibility.) Very often the "child wonders" began to lose it when they got into their teens because they began to harden up everything and didn't realize how flexible they had to keep.

You are centered, I say, in your solar plexus when you play the cello; not in your arms, but in your solar plexus. I think rowing is one of the most marvelous things because you really pull your body forward and the ores come [gestures]. And with swimming you have to push your arms back when you're swimming in order for your body to go forward.

It's this type of positive-negative that I'm talking about. It is a beautiful pulling in, not with the arms but with the body coming out to meet the arms. The first thing I teach anybody is my baby clutch. I shouldn't use the word "clutch," but I used it because it, again, is that negative and the positive. You don't clutch, but every baby grabs you and every mother knows that when the baby gets hold of your hair it won't let go.

When I can get this kind of a baby clutch across to my students, then they have what they need for the bow, and they have what they need for the strings of the left hand. Then I make them pull themselves right up with it. It's just loads of fun. I'm going to make you do it with me right here. We'll just have the experience of it, even though nobody can see us doing it.

You sit right there. Take me right like this and let me pull myself. You just hold me and I'm going to pull myself up. Now, here are my arms, just like this. My arms are not like this [rigid]. I'm not going to play with hands like that. I'm playing with arms that are just here and my legs are like this [free, flexible]. I can use anything; I can do anything I want. That's it, and not this, when they tighten right up.

Rowell: For cello, they're so likely to tighten or have strong muscles in their upper arms, because they think they have to come out to their elbows and then be free here. They ruin the whole thing of coming through from their back. Everybody knows me for my bear hug. (In fact, I had people send me bears and all sorts of things.) The bear hug is just, I always say, "X marks the spot." Just lift either arm up. Right here. Reach right out. Pick me up. Feel my elbow there. This is where they think they should come out with both their arms. Lift me right up. Now, lift me up again. It's totally different. Just from the back, I changed that.

That's the negative of the positive. I say negative of the positive, you notice. I wouldn't say it was a negative thing. It's negative of the positive. You're always going some place with it. It's just the way the foot works, through the heel.

Riess: When we first met you talked about the Alexander Technique. Would you say something about that.

Rowell: I first heard about the Alexander Technique about forty years ago. That was when F.M. Alexander was living in England and teaching a great deal. I followed it then. But it has, since then, become something that musicians use all over the country. The theater and the musicians were the first ones, I think, to grab onto it. When I taught in England in 1974 and '75, we always had an Alexander person with us, from nine a.m. to five p.m. every day. I never could get in fifteen minutes with her, even, because she was so booked up.

It is just a part of music. It is really centering you, right straight through the whole body. He says that it's the way the head sits on the body. It is not making you stand straighter, I might say, but it is making you stand more completely naturally, so that the arms and the legs work without interference, and so on. I think every musician should take it.

Riess: Let me go back and ask you whether any great musicians have come from the ones that you would judge to be more problematic than talented?

Rowell: Let me think that through for another time, maybe, if you don't mind.

Riess: Okay.

Rowell: I think I have, but I would have to give more thought to it.

Ingredients: Determination, Taking Responsibility

Riess: I wonder whether at some point what you were doing was providing more therapy than musicianship?

Rowell: No, I don't think so. I really don't. I wouldn't call it therapy. Therapy would imply that I was doing it mentally so much, getting in thought and doing all this. I think that it is coming through their entire body that I do it. I always say that it's from the inside out. I do think it's good therapy, but I think that's incidental.

Riess: If you have a pupil who really does seem to be blocked, psychologically, and you can recognize that, can you help that person through music? Or do you direct them elsewhere?

Rowell: I do think of one who, I would say, was very blocked. She first contacted me by telephone from southern California and wanted to know, if she moved up, if I would take her. I said I didn't know, I couldn't tell. She said, "Well, I want to fly up and have you hear me play."

She came up the day after New Year's. I said I would meet her at the Oakland airport. I didn't know anything about her, but she had studied with somebody very good in Los Angeles. Then, somebody called me from Sacramento and said they understood she was coming to me, and asked, "Did she ever mention to you that she was blind?" I said, "Oh, no, not at all."

I was prepared for it, then, when I met her. She asked me, "Did somebody call you?" and named the person.

I said, "Yes." (This was still over the telephone.)

She said, "What did she say?"

"She said you were blind."

She said, "Oh, well, I thought so. I don't want anybody to know it, ever."

She has that blockage in her. She will not allow anybody to know that she's blind, she will not accept it. It is marvelous in one way, but it blocked her with her cello because--she's marvelously intelligent--she insists that everything be out in Braille for her, so that she would have it in Braille before she heard it or studied it. The notes, downbows and upbows, fingered, everything so that she could learn it right from the Braille.

Rowell: Well, this is all right, but you're not learning it through the ear in any way whatsoever. She learned the notes, but she was playing on the surface of the cello, and she was therefore playing out of tune, because it wasn't connected to herself. But she got what she thought was a good tone, she thought she played well, and she was very proud of her playing.

I met her at the airport. By that time she knew I knew she was blind. She was very heavy set and, of course, walked with a cane. I brought her home and she played part of the E-Minor Brahms, which is a beautiful sonata for cello. She played quite well when she got to the upper register, very poorly in the lower registers. (It's usually the other way around.)

I figured that out instantly. The upper position is really a natural position for us, but because it is higher and we learn the lower positions first, we think it's harder. But when she went back to the lower position she immediately tightened up that arm, and she was playing back here out of tune which everybody else considers the easiest because you learn first position first.

Anyway, she was so eager that I said I would take her. I didn't know what it implied to her, to move from Los Angeles to San Francisco--a complete move of years and years--find herself a place in San Francisco, and then come out to the conservatory and take lessons. She never wanted any help with that. She found her way out on the different buses and found her way to my room.

She had taken some lessons from Gabor Rejto, one of the finest teachers in Los Angeles, and he had once said, "I want to help you down the stairs," and treated her as a blind person. She said, "I can't take this." She got mad and just left him. I had several occasions, after I took her, when I corrected her with things, and she said, "I'm not going to take another lesson." She'd just be very, very angry with me. But I lasted through those very easily. I let her come back by herself.

She wanted to always be playing in public. She didn't know how hard it was to put her on programs. She would learn the music quite well but when she was the least bit nervous--which everybody is, I hope--intonation, everything would go back on her. She didn't realize why it was hard to put her on programs.

There has been a breakthrough this last year. I've had her for I can't tell you how many years, with a little bit of improvement, but not a lot. I finally said she had to tape herself for me and bring me what she taped. She said, "But I don't have a good tape recorder." I said, "Well, use the one you have anyway." I knew the trouble was not with the tape recorder; it was what she heard on the tape that disturbed her.

Rowell: Rapidly she has improved so much by having to bring me those tapes. At first I couldn't listen to them because of the quality. Now they are really beautiful. I cannot get over what she is doing. What she just did now, without my doing anything about it, was to find out different places to play Kol Nidre, which is one of the most gorgeous cello solos ever written.

(I think I mentioned to you already, I played it twenty-two years in succession for the Jewish synagogue in Oakland, and loved playing it. When I had Galen I spent two weeks in the hospital afterwards--it was a very hard birth--and I came home with somebody to take care of me. They kept calling: "You have to come and play. Oh, you have a son? That doesn't make any difference." [laughter] So, I think he was just about three weeks old when it was Yom Kippur and I had to go down and play it, and I did.)

I might say that the Kodaly unaccompanied is one of the most difficult solos for the cello, and that's what she's bringing me next time. She is taking responsibility; therefore, she doesn't demand lessons as often, and she's glad to get them when she gets them. I tell my students when they come to me, the best compliment they can ever give me is not to need me. She is playing beautifully and I am very happy for her.

VI 1934, CHANGING DIRECTIONS, SOCIAL ISSUES

The Standard School Broadcasts##

Riess: Please tell me about the Standard School Broadcasts. You were the director of this from 1928 to 1938?

Rowell: I wasn't the director all the time.

[break in the tape]

Rowell: Three of us were on KGO in Oakland, broadcasting every day. There was a man who I may have mentioned, Arthur S. Garbett. He came in there to visit one day. He was quite deaf. The head of KGO was going to send him away, thinking he was sort of a pest, as it were, when the musical conductor, Carl Rhodehamel, stopped and started talking to him and found that this man had a remarkable, astonishing, incomprehensible musical mind. When you showed him the library of music there, for KGO--Carl Rhodehamel was the conductor of the KGO Little Symphony--this man practically burst into tears.

It turned out that Garbett was one of the editors of the Etude magazine, which was the musical magazine of that era, and knew more about music and all of those things than anybody Carl Rhodehamel had ever seen in his life, so he got hold of him and he became one of the Arion Trio's dearest friends. Those two men together began turning out programs that were really something. Arthur S. Garbett, as far as we know, did the first writing about programs that had ever been done on any radio programming in the United States. ([Walter] Damrosch began it a few years afterwards in New York. Those Damrosch programs, as I remember, had Damrosch speak a little bit before each number. But it started with Arthur S. Garbett in 1924.) Our programs began to be known because of these things.

NBC EDUCATIONAL AND AGRICULTURAL ADVANCE PROGRAM SERVICE

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NBC Personalities—Margaret Avery Rowell

Music director of the popular Standard School broadcast, a program heard by thousands of youngsters in classrooms throughout the West, Margaret Avery Rowell possesses a lengthy record of musical achievement dating far back to those fevered days when radio in the Bay Area was still very much in its nebulous form.

Margaret Avery Rowell

Mrs. Ruwell is recognized on or off the air aa an outstanding 'cellist, one of the original members of the Arion Trio, launched upon the airwaves during KGO's inaugural program in 1924. The trio has been regularly heard from that time to the present, automatically becoming members of the NBC staff when KGO linked its destiny with the network.

Mrs. Rowell was born in Redlands, California, schooled in San Jose grammar schools, graduated from the Technical High School in Oakland and later received her diploma in music and social economics from the University of California.

Her ambitions during those preparatory years were focused upon social work, with music merely a medium for enjoyment. It may have been a whim of the Muse Euterpe, unwilling to see talent sacrificed on the altar of materialism, that guided Mrs. Rowell—then Margaret Avery—into a career of music, defeating the early aspirations toward social work. It may be, however, that the social service she has rendered by way of her music has even exceeded the effort she would have expended in the compilation and investigation of case histories.

A charming, vital personality, Mrs. Rowell entertains convictions regarding musicians, established from analysis of her own experience and that of those whom she has known. That artists should live a well-rounded life rather than become slaves to their instruments is of paramount importance, according to her philosophy. A robot that plays ootes mechanically could never develop the faculty of emotional expression, and thus it is with musicians who have allowed to escape that faculty of emotion with which humans are ao blessedly endowed.

In regards to musical instruction of children, Mrs. Rowell expounds certain theories justified by many unfortunate illustrations.

"Too often," she states, "music is allowed to become sheer drudgery to youngsters. They are guided in their musical instruction as a mechanism would be adjusted, thereby not attaining a true sensitivity for musical values, but rather little more than a veneer."

In seeking to impart the background of music to children, some definite association should be made between that music and life, is her contention.

"To create a feeling in children for music, it is important to associate that music with things tangible," she explains. "And it is that educational purpose for which the Standard School broadcast exists, and as a result is heard by air in many public schools as part of their curriculum."

The last of the original trio to marry, Mrs. Rowell took that name approximately a year and six months ago when she became the wife of Edward Z. Rowell, professor of public speaking and philosophy at the University of California.

She is inordinately fond of cooking, especially over a glowing campfire. After a difficult and ennervating day, she finds the practice of returning home and preparing a aizable dinner a most positive form of relaxation for her.

Mrs. Rowell scoffs at the theory that professional women should not marry if they desire to continue their activities. It is her fervent contention that never has she felt more in the spirit of her work, which includes both radio and private instruction, since her marriage.

She espouaes a simple but effective philosophy: "Be a human being first, and then, if you must, be a musician." 12-12-37

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 16, 1937

EDUCATIONAL

P. s. t.

11:00 a.m.—**Standard School Broadcast**—"Emotional Music," Elementary lesson; "Modern American Music," Advanced lesson; Arion Trio, instrumentalists. NBC Service to Red network KPO KHQ KOMO KGW KFI KFSD

11:15 a.m.—**Let's Talk It Over**—guest speakers; Lisa Sergio, mistreas of ceremonies; orchestra. NBC Service New York studios to Blue network

12:30 p.m.—**Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra**—Guy Fraser Harrison, conductor. NBC Service from Rochester to Blue netwurk (KGO on 12:45)

5:30 p.m.—**March of Time**—newa dramatiza-

Air—Symposium featuring noted guest speakers. NBC Service from Towo Hall, N. Y. C., to Blue network

8:15-9:15 p.m.—**Standard Symphony Hour**—San Francisco Symphony Orchestra, Pierre Monteux, conductor. NBC Service from Portland to Red network KPO KHQ KOMO KGW KFI

9:45-10:00 a.m.—**The University Explorer**—Talk on "The Mystery of Easter Island," based on material supplied by Dr. Alfred Metraux, lecturer in Anthropology. NBC Service to KGO and California Blue network

AGRICULTURAL

11:30-12:30 p.m.—**Western Farm and Home Hour**—NBC and U. S. Department of Agriculture coöperating. John and Clarence, Farm 'n' Homenizers, "In the Old Front Parlor." Western Homemakers' Calendar with Anne Hanten, "'A' is fur Apple." "Leaves from a Forest Ranger's Diary," Lou Barrett, Veteran Forester. "Review of Fruit and Vegetable Markets," Lee Jackson, Federal-State Market News Service. "The 4-H Dairy Club Program in the Western States," prepared by Roy C. Jones, and delivered by Jennings Pierce. Weather and grain market reports. "Harvesters," orchestra, Ricardo directing. NBC Service to Blue network KGO KECA KFSD KTAR KEX KJR KGA KMED KFBK KWG KMJ KERN

12:30-12:45 p.m.—**Agricultural Bulletin**—market reports from Federal-State Market News Service. NBC Service to KGO

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 17, 1937

EDUCATIONAL

P. s. t.

12:45 p.m.—**Commonwealth Club Luncheon**—guest speaker. NBC Service to Blue network

3:00 p.m.—**Education in the News**—Shannon Allen, commentator. NBC Service Washington studios to Red network

6:45-7:00 p.m.—**Your Government at Your Service**—auspices San Francisco Federal Business Association and the National Emergency Council; interviewing guest

8:45 p.m.—**California State Chamber of Commerce Program**—"March of Progress"—stories of California's growth and development—problems facing the state today—as told by Mr. William Adams and guest speakers. NBC Service to KGO KECA KFSD KTMS KTAR KFBK KWG KMJ KERN

AGRICULTURAL

7:00-7:30 a.m.—**"California Agriculture"**—National Broadcasting Company presents agricultural series designed primarily to give voice to California agricultural organizations. Charley Runyan at the console of NBC's Philharmonic organ, provides the music fare. NBC Service to KGO KECA KFSD KWG

9:30-10:00 a.m.—**National Farm and Home Hour.** KGO KECA KEX KJR KGA KFSD KDYL KGIR KGHL KTAR

11:30-12:30 p.m.—**Western Farm and Home Hour**—NBC and United States Department of Agriculture coöperating. "Uncle Sam's Forest Rangers," Episode No. 275. Monthly Western States 4-H Club presentation. California Clubs will be featured, with Alameda County represented. Theme: "4-H Club Leadership." Monthly appearance, California State Chamber of Commerce, Agriculture Department. Another in the series of great agricultural cooperatives of the West. Pacific and Rocky Mountain time zone weather forecasts. The "Harvesters," orchestra under direction of Ricardo. NBC Service to KGO KECA KFSD KEX KJR KGA KTAR KERN KFBK KWG KMJ KOB KTMS

12:30-12:45 p.m.—**Agricultural Bulletin**—Federal-State Market News Service. NBC Service to KGO

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 18, 1937

EDUCATIONAL

P. s. t.

8:00 a.m.—**Florence Hale's Radio Column.** NBC Service New York studios to Red network

6:00 p.m.—**Education Today**—auspices California State Department of Education. NBC Service to split Blue network

Basil Cameron, of England, guest conductor who is directing the San Francisco orchestra during the first half of the season

The San Francisco Symphony Orchestra, f
for the Standard

The Arion Trio, whose music renderings are an important part of the Standard School Broadcast

RADIO'S development has enabled the Standard Oil Company of California to present programs of the world's finest music throughout the Pacific Coast area—also to offer a course of training heartily indorsed by outstanding educators, who declare it to be a most valuable aid in fitting listeners, both children

Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra, which alternates with the San
Thursday evening througho

from *Standard Oil Bulletin*

:ow playing every other Thursday evening
Symphony Hour

Issay Dobrowen, of Russia, guest conductor who will direct the San Francisco orchestra during the second half of the season

and adults, to enjoy good music. And there is ample evidence that these activities have resulted in a marked advance in musical taste. Herewith are pictured Company co-operators in the venture. Elsewhere in this BULLETIN the social and practical aspects of music appreciation are discussed.

Francisco orchestra, so that there is a Standard Symphony Hour every
at the winter music season

Dr. Artur Rodzinski, directing the Los Angeles orchestra this season, his second year with that organization

Rowell: The Standard Oil Company became very much interested in doing something over the radio. In those days you did not do any advertising, as such. It was a long process, but from the very earliest they chose the trio and Arthur S. Garbett to do the writing for it. He wrote all those early programs, giving all the program notes, then this was published in book form and sent out to all the schools. The San Francisco Symphony gave one Thursday night, and the Los Angeles Symphony the next Thursday night. We gave the morning broadcast, which had Arthur S. Garbett's notes in it, very carefully written.

I shouldn't call them notes. It was really a wonderful explanation for the young people, about the music itself. It might be just the William Tell Overture one time. That has a perfectly terrific cello solo to begin with, and the whole first introduction is for six cellos together. But to sit there playing that one solo part all by yourself, you know, is really something.

Riess: You played in the morning what the symphony would broadcast at night?

Rowell: Yes, and whatever music we did was explained very carefully to the school children.

I have these books which I will show you. This was sent all over. I cannot tell you how many schools had it and how many thousands of children gathered in their auditoriums at school. They had the radio on and all listened very carefully. Then they were supposed to listen at home again that night. Whether they listened to it at home at night, they got the gist of the music in the morning.

It was fascinating. Some of it was hard, too, because some of the orchestra music doesn't lend itself well to three people.

Riess: How much preparation would you have to do?

Rowell: I think, now, that we should have done more preparation. We had about a three hour rehearsal, just the three of us together. It was years before we had any other instruments with us. This was all on NBC when it finally started. We gave our program with Mr. Garbett's notes long before we were on NBC, but NBC was where Standard School Broadcast was.

That was going out to all the schools. We often had whatever instrument was prominent in the program. It might be an oboe, it might be a clarinet, for some solo part. They wouldn't do all the parts. We would do most of the illustrations, but we would have another instrument from the San Francisco Symphony, or the

Rowell: Los Angeles Symphony, whichever one was doing it there. (Los Angeles didn't have any broadcasting studios in those days. They were merely a re-broadcast place, as were the other ones.)

Riess: Did this go nationwide?

Rowell: No. San Francisco, Los Angeles, Spokane, Seattle, Portland, were the main circuit. Sometimes Denver. Of course, once in a while something would go nationwide, but not usually.

Riess: Were you well paid for that?

Rowell: Yes. Very well, though not by present day standards at all. I was speaking to Frances Wiener Shorr the other day and we were both laughing at what we got in those days. But during the Depression we were the only ones who were really well paid, because we had that eighty-five dollars a week. That was a tremendous sum, much more than any symphony players could possible get. We were the highest paid of any musicians in the area working on a regular basis. Unless it would be jazz muscians playing or something like that.

Riess: This was a ten year period, from 1928 to 1938, that you were doing it?

Rowell: Yes.

Riess: Through the Depression?

Rowell: Yes. And during the Depression was really when our pay was higher.

I did something awfully funny. I've never mentioned it to anybody. Standard School Broadcast actually started when I was ill. So, it was taking place when I came back and I had to jump into it as well as other things. Getting this high salary hurt me because I saw so much [misery]. Living in a small but nice apartment in San Francisco, I made myself live on what was called the minimum standard of living for women, which was very much lower than for men. I made myself live on it, which meant I never ate a meal out unless it was necessary.

I always got up around four-thirty in the morning because we had a six-thirty rehearsal at NBC, and got myself down there in the black, walking through Chinatown at that time of the morning. If I got up just terribly late, why then I stopped and paid fifteen cents for pancakes at a pancake house on the way, and thought it was a wonderful breakfast.

Rowell: I would buy very black bread, which was not in style at all. Everybody was eating that fancy white stuff. I'd get black bread and frozen spinach, and practically live on it. I turned vegetarian--except when I was invited out, when I gladly overstepped. Diet was not even talked about in those days. I had learned to cook vegetables very lightly, which seemed to delight most of my friends. And I loved that with salad and the dark, darkest of breads I could find. In fact so dark it was hard and difficult to cut it. And I remember keeping it a week or more. I enjoyed the simplicity of my life.

And I did give. I don't say this much, but I just felt that that money didn't belong to me in a time of depression. There was a UXA [Unemployed Exchange] type of thing and I gave whatever I had to that and felt much better about things. So, it worked out that way.

Carl Rhodehamel, KGO Little Symphony Conductor, and the UXA

Rowell: Carl Rhodehamel, who was the conductor of the KGO Little Symphony and also very much interested in everything was one who, if I ever had a very, very dear friend, he was it. He started forming the Unemployed Exchange Association, UXA, and I gave a lot of money to it.* It was in Oakland, and it was a place evidently where they exchanged, particularly their labor, for all sorts of different things. If you were a plumber, you exchanged it with somebody else, and you did this and you did that, and they kept track of it.

Riess: Did you play benefit concerts at that time?

Rowell: Oh yes.

Riess: Did you organize the trio to do a lot of that?

Rowell: We were all, in the trio, of one mind, absolutely. We were all interested.

This was at the time of the great strike in San Francisco. This was at the time of the labor unions. We were always for that [labor] side of it, and it was very exciting and interesting. I would go to meetings at night. I would go to all sorts of things.

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*[recorded October 24, 1983]

Rowell: I attended a Communist meeting without realizing it was a Communist meeting. [laughs] But seeing that whole labor movement grow in San Francisco was very exciting. It grew out of that Depression really remarkably.

Riess: And how about the Musicians Union, was it formed at about the same time?

Rowell: Oh, I think it had always been going along. Peculiarly enough, the Musicians Union--I hate to say it; if they get hold of this, they won't like it--never interested me in the least. We put off joining as long as we possibly could. Even though we believed in labor, it always seemed to us that the Musicians Union was run by people who only cared about how much money they could pull out of the union, and they sat there at desks rather than anything else. I think that's what's happened to so much labor. We were all disappointed in what labor unions were able to do, or did do, I should say--not able to do, but did do. Because they had such an advantage that we were all for.

Anyway, we put off joining the Musicians Union for very, very long. For years we didn't belong, and we were the only people around the bay who didn't. We were on their blacklist. When we finally had to join, when we went to NBC--even at KGO we didn't have to belong--when we had to join, we were scared to death, because we were on their blacklist, of what they would do to us. Of course, what really happened was that they were so glad to have us come that they just passed us without hardly listening to us.

But Carl Rhodehamel gave me absolutely everything. I saw a great deal of him. We were together a great deal of the time. I know some people said that he was one of the most intelligent--one person who didn't know I even knew him said he thought he was one of the three people who knew what Einstein's theory was, in that day when it was said that only three people understood it.

He had traveled around the world in 1899 and 1900, playing both the cello and, I believe, tuba. He played all of the virtuoso solos on the tuba as the soloist of this orchestra that went around the world.

Riess: I think you alluded to him once before. Was he a good deal older than you? Are you saying that you had a love attachment to him?

Rowell: He was older. I don't think I ever really went with anybody who wasn't much older than myself. He was about the same age as my future husband who was older than me, I believe. We were together

Rowell: constantly, but my mother's old New England background about "waiting for marriage" made it hard on me. I know that I loved him very much and he loved me.

I haven't told you about all my wonderful long hikes that I used to take in the Sierra with my sister. I will have to tell you about these. One summer, after a big hike to Mt. Whitney, he insisted on coming to Yosemite afterwards where I was playing, and we did all our hiking together, climbing the cables on the backside of Half Dome, climbing up Yosemite Falls on that zigzag trail, then cutting absolutely free out to Eagle Point, where there weren't any trails. Then going along through all the meadows, full of white and blue violets, and to the top part of El Cap. There were no trails at all.

If he had to go to New York he would send me three special delivery, air mail letters a day. He was a remarkable person who did not graduate from college but read all the great books, and had a world sense for the future. He foresaw the Chinese revolution, and the Spanish Civil War. His was a great influence on me. I probably learned more about the living world from him than my entire college education.

He went over from KGO, where he was connected, to NBC and was in charge of publicity for NBC for quite a while, but then he moved to Los Angeles. He was very interested in bringing sound into movies--of then unheard. He did a great deal of recording of voices. He rented Rudolph Valentino's house in Hollywood and set up his work down there. I didn't see him much after he moved to Los Angeles. Once in a while, but that's all. He was a very fine and brilliant person. My life is much richer because of him.

Concern for Social Issues, Upton Sinclair

Riess: Where do we go from there? Actually, I'm glad you brought up the thing about not really holding on to all of that money, because your heart really was with the needy.

Rowell: Oh, yes. It was entirely. It was a very interesting time. A time of great urgency, like a caldron going around. You never knew what was coming next. There was no solidity to anything.

Riess: Other than giving the concerts for the unemployed, did you become politically involved?

Rowell: Yes, it was a time of ferment. I wish I could remember all those people who appealed to us so much. I think I mentioned Upton Sinclair. He ran for governor of California. We were all for him, very decidedly, even though he was "way out."

I came back from the South Sea Islands, having been gone three months.

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Rowell: When my dad said that I would have to get right down to the Income Tax office right away, I went in fear and trembling. My very good friend, the vice-president of the bank, always attended to everything for me. I, evidently, hadn't turned in something. I don't know what had happened, but anyway, they said they'd been on my track and if I hadn't come in everything was going to happen plus putting me in jail, I guess, for evasion of something.

I went in fear and trembling down there. The man behind the desk looked at my papers, went back and spoke to somebody else, and then came back. I didn't know what had happened. Then he looked up at me and said, "Didn't you play for the Upton Sinclair rally at the Oakland Auditorium?"

My heart sank. I said, "Yes, I did." (In fact, I had been in charge of the whole music for it.)

So, he went around, spoke to somebody else back there and came back and said, "Oh. All right. You're clear. Good-bye." [laughter] He had been there!

Riess: Oh, and you expected quite the opposite.

Rowell: I expected just the opposite. [laughter] I haven't told that exactly as it was, but it was a terrific pile up.

That Upton Sinclair thing, I got in that just by accident. I had been so interested in the black people in Oakland, living as they did in that complete district. They had a big, black chorus led by a conductor who I thought was simply wonderful. I would go to rehearsals of this chorus, so when a great big program for Upton Sinclair being elected was planned, they asked me to provide the music, and I got this hundred voice Negro chorus to come up and sing for it.

It was on a Sunday morning. Hundreds and hundreds of people were there. One of the main speakers was supposed to be Charles Erskine Scott Wood. Our trio played. This was when Joyce had already left for New York and our pianist was Elizabeth Alexander,

Rowell: a beautiful pianist. Charles Erskine Scott Wood was ill and in his place came his wife, Sara Bard Field. Our pianist went right over and kissed her and said how glad she was to see her, and told me what a lovely person she was. So I, for the first time in my life, shook hands with Sara Bard Field, not realizing that she would very soon be one of my very dear friends, and that her daughter would be one of my closest friends. (I just got a letter yesterday from her daughter [Kay Caldwell].)

Sara Bard Field got up and spoke for Upton Sinclair. This was quite something for me, it really did something for me, that particular occasion, seeing how interested the people were in getting something to happen in California.

Riess: Did you become more involved?

Rowell: I had said to Joyce, even before she left for New York, "I just feel the need to go back to school. I have to. I can't take this broadcasting, day after day, and feel that this is what I want to be doing."

We had a huge library of music, a fine library of music, but when we began broadcasting just the evening concerts and so on, it was not as interesting. It became more like dinner music or something like that. I mean, to the people listening, even though they would write letters to us. But it wasn't the thing I wanted to spend the rest of my life doing. I felt the urge for something much more. If I had been able, or if I had even wanted to branch out to be a soloist, but I never had any desire to sit up on the platform and be a virtuoso. I loved to play the melodies. I loved music. But I didn't have that instinct in me to be a soloist. I was more a musician than a born performer.

Riess: And so you were trying to figure out where it was all going.

Rowell: I knew I wanted to study. Joyce knew what I meant. I said, "I want to go back and see what I can do."

I went to summer school at the university and took a course in race relations, among other things. It was there that I met the wonderful conductor of the black chorus. It was then that I would go down to West Oakland and listen to them rehearse, and I felt absolutely at home. My teacher of the summer, out from Columbia University, took me to an NAACP meeting. The two of us were the only white people there. Afterwards she said, "I took you just to see how you would behave. You're a natural."

Rowell: I was brought up that way. The family across the street from us was a mother with her three Jewish daughters. One of them stayed home from school every year to take care of the mother and to work while the other two went to school. They all graduated from college, and they all three took that marvelous care of their mother. We had them across for dinner. I never even knew--if there is such a thing as looking Jewish, they did, but it wasn't until they'd all graduated from college and I'd been through all that time, that I ever knew the word Jew or knew that they were Jewish. They were just the best of friends, and I loved them. I thank my parents for this type of an education. People were people. Negroes were people. Everyone. So, I was prepared for it and loved it.

Ed Rowell's Class in Public Speaking

Riess: When you decided to start back to school, the first thing that you chose was this summer session course in race relations.

Rowell: Yes. Then I found out, at the end of summer session, this same teacher who was so interesting thought I should go into the field of social work. "There's only one thing," she said, "you simply do not know how to speak in public."

I could not, even up to that time, get up and say anything in class. It was impossible for me to do. I went all through college. Even in my history sections I couldn't recite. I could write anything down, but I couldn't get up and recite. I still get a lump in my throat every time I have to get up and talk.

When I got the American String Teacher's Association Award for the Outstanding Music Teacher of the Year, in 1977, of course I was the main speaker. I prepared for that for months ahead of time. I started in in the fall and had it well prepared. Renie Sharp and I went back to Kansas City, where the convention was. She says to this day I was shaking all over. I didn't sleep the night before. I never thought I was going to be able to get through it, no voice would come at all. Of course, I went out and did it all right. It came off very well. To this day I'm always nervous.

Riess: I thought you were going to tell me a success story, about how you had been nervous and then you took a class in public speaking and you were never nervous again.

Rowell: Oh, no. Nothing like that. We haven't gotten to the public speaking class though, have we?

Riess: No. You said that your teacher had said that if you were going to--

Rowell: Oh, she said that I had to take a public speaking class. Yes. But I was still broadcasting all the time. I had to meet my rhearsals and I had to meet my performances. So I had to choose a class that could fit in, and the only one was Monday at one o'clock.

I walked into the class. I think I wore my hat. Of course, I was dressed just ready to go to broadcast, with my cello under one arm. I always carried a big satchel of music with the other hand. I walked into this class and the professor stopped the class dead--it had already begun--and said, "Margaret Avery! What are you doing here?"

Riess: How embarrassing.

Rowell: I said, "I'll tell you afterwards." I put my cello in a corner and sat down. That was my future husband. [laughter]

I had never looked to see who was going to teach the class. He was the only one I could have at that period. My teacher had asked me to be sure to get Professor [Arnold] Perstein, because he would deal with race relations. So, I went up afterwards. (I'd forgotten at that time that I'd met Professor Rowell before.) I said, "I have to take speech, but I have been told to get Professor Perstein."

He said, "Well, I think I can do just as well by you." (He always spoke very deliberately.) "I think I can give you the general principles and everything that will underlie it, and you will be just as well off." [laughter] So, that was that.

This was just as Joyce was leaving for New York and had left us without a pianist, and we had to choose one. The union was being very nasty, as they are, and we had to choose a union player. The only one we wanted was Elizabeth Alexander, who was a perfectly gorgeous pianist and played for all the big singers, opera singers from New York who would come out in the summer time and she would work with them the whole summer and then they would give concerts around here before they went back to give their New York concerts. That made them feel sure. We wanted her, but we couldn't because of the Musicians Union. What we did was to have to go through trying out these different pianists and turning them down.

Rowell: It was my business to go to the union and say we wanted Elizabeth Alexander, and she would join the union. You see, you were not allowed to join the union to play a project. You had to already belong. So, I went to Ed Rowell and said, "I have to make a speech for the Musicians Union. Maybe you can help me with that?"

He said, "You meet me at lunch at the Faculty Club."

So, we did. I don't know how much we discussed about it. I don't know how much he really helped me. That thing turned out very well and we did get Elizabeth Alexander.

I remember having lunch with Ed and [Joel] Hildebrand and a professor from the law school. Professor Ballentine. I remember having lunch with those three, and it was very interesting. He said he was going to ask me again. But I was in his class, and I didn't think anything; I liked him, but I didn't have any attachment to him whatsoever, though I would hear the girls say in the class, "Oh, isn't he wonderful!"

Riess: You were a good deal older than the others in the class, weren't you?

Rowell: Yes, I was. That's awfully funny you mention that, because age never meant anything to me, and it still doesn't. I wake up in the morning and have to remind myself that I'm eighty-one, because I really can't feel it. I really don't know it. I think many people feel this. I never realized that I was an older person in the class. You mention that and it comes as a surprise to me.

Riess: People are very interested in the idea of women returning in their middle years and going back to school.

Rowell: Then I should mention that my mother went to evening school. She learned all of her millinery and such arts there. In her very late years she took courses in political science at UC. I thought it was a very natural thing. I never gave it a second thought. Now that you mention it, I <u>was</u> older.

An Earlier Meeting with Ed; Marriage

Riess: And how had you met Professor Rowell before? You said you had met him.

Rowell: Oh, yes. I most certainly had! My father taught and was principal of the Redlands High School. He was very devoted to his students and he would tell all his students they had to go to Stanford.

Above left: Professor Edward Z. Rowell, ca. 1936.

Above right: The wedding of Edward Z. Rowell and Margaret Avery, May 24, 1936.

Left: A post-concert reception, 1967. Left to right, butler serving James Mayfield Kaye, and Professor and Mrs. Rowell.

Rowell: One of his outstanding students was Herbert Stolz. Of course my father told him, as he told other students, that he had to go to Stanford. So, Herbert Stolz came to Stanford where, in no time, he was David Starr Jordan's first-hand person. Went with him every place, helped him with his lectures, did everything for him. He became a medical doctor and went on to be in charge of all physical education for California schools, where my sister Marion knew him so well.

I didn't know him that well, but his mother had been a doctor in Redlands, in the town I was born in. I can remember her walking up and down those streets, with her great, big swishing skirt. When she died in Oakland, in 1933, Herbert Stolz called me up and said the memorial service would be a month or so after her death and he wanted the Arion Trio to give the concert. He said, "There will be no funeral whatsoever. We just want a concert by you three, and that will be it."

We came out to their home in Berkeley, off of the Arlington, on a Sunday afternoon, December 11, 1933, and gave the concert. It was just the relatives. I would say there were maybe twenty or thirty of them, at the most, sitting around in the living room, with a beautiful Steinway. I didn't know at that time that his wife was a very accomplished pianist who had studied with Mr. Raab, one of the great pianists of Vienna, Austria, whom she was later to bring over here, to Berkeley, where he lived and died, and had a school of pianists who are still the outstanding teachers of Berkeley.

We played our concert on that Sunday afternoon--played all our things--and were ready to go. We had to get back to play at the Athens Club, where we always gave the Sunday evening concert. (As I said, the trio always went every place together.) But this gentleman with a beard just kept talking and talking to me. At last I broke away and left. The trio kidded me a little bit on the way down. I wouldn't have known him if I had met him again.

Several months later evidently this particular person--he was a cousin of Herbert Stolz--called him up and said, "If you ever should invite Margaret Avery, invite me." (It seemed that he had lost his wife six years before from cancer and everybody had been trying to get him married off, and he wouldn't look at anybody.) They waited about six months and then they invited me for dinner.

Well, an offer to go to Herbert Stolz's for dinner was just right down my alley. That was something I would do in a minute, even though I was living in San Francisco at the time. My sister

Rowell: Marion said, "I know it isn't you that's invited. I know it's me!" because she knew Herbert Stolz so well. My father had to call up twice to be sure that it was I that was supposed to come.

I came over from San Francisco and went out with my dad. I sat next to a man I'd never seen before--a very clean-shaven man. I never paid any attention to him whatsoever, because I was just crazy about Herbert Stolz. I sat with Herbert Stolz, ignoring this gentleman to the left of me. My father was just ready to depart on his trip around the world, and I was just ready to depart for the South Sea Islands. I was full of that, I guess, and I didn't remember who sat next to me. I really didn't. [laughter] So, that is the time when Ed Rowell had been invited. He said that I didn't pay any attention to him and he saw there was no use in carrying it any further, whatsoever. Which he didn't.

Before I registered for his class he had been a year at Stanford, on his sabbatical, and had come back. I went to his class. Here was this man, and I'd seen him once on the street with Professor Watkins, but it didn't make any impresson on me at all because here was this clean-shaven man. I never knew they were the same person until I was engaged to him.

Riess: He must have thought it was the most wonderful thing in the world to have you come into his classroom.

Rowell: Well, he most certainly waited long enough before he asked me for another noon at the Faculty Club. It was several months before he asked me again. Then he said, "Would you sometimes bring your lunch up and eat it with me?" So, I did. Of course, I did see what a wonderful person he was. Then, when I had to make my speech, he helped me.

We were very interested in each other. He had a daughter, sixteen years old. When he brought me up to this home, I couldn't believe it! It's just a block away from where Joyce Barthelson always lived--where her husband, who was a builder, built her house and many others. She was a wonderful cook and she would have us over for dinner. Both Frances and I, living alone, would love to come over. She would say, "Go on and take a walk." We'd go out with her husband and take a walk.

We would make one turn and be on Miller Avenue. I remember this house and the wonderful flowers and the roses right up the path. I stopped in, just to smell them, because I never would touch a flower in anybody else's garden. This was the only house between here and Joyce's, I guess. But I had no idea that Ed would bring me up to the very house that I remembered.

Rowell: That was the beginning of the end. We were engaged while I was still taking his course and nobody in the class ever, ever guessed it. He wanted to be sure of that. The class ended about May 17 or 18, and we were married May 24. I think the class was very much surprised.

Riess: Would it have been considered to be a scandal?

Rowell: Not at all. Not in any way. It was just a matter of my getting up to make speeches in class and that type of thing. Not in any way a scandal.

In fact, I remember I was taking another class at the university and found out the two classes were too much with all I was doing. I wanted to drop my psychology class, but the professor said, "You shouldn't drop it."

I said, "But I'm going to be married."

He said, "That doesn't make any difference. My wife took my course up to two weeks before she was married."

Helen Keller

Riess: When we first met you had a clipping about Helen Keller.* What was that?

Rowell: On, Helen Keller--when I think of Helen Keller I just want to put my arms out and do something. I had read her book, as every kid did. I worshipped her as a child.

When the trio was on NBC in the very early years, out in Oakland, where KGO had its headquarters, the head of the music end of it and the head of the broadcasting end of it were both very good friends of ours. I was amazed one day when they came in and said, "Just don't get excited, but Helen Keller is coming."

I was of course very excited. To this moment I cannot tell you whether Mrs. Sullivan was with her or not, or whether it was after Mrs. Sullivan had died. I can't tell you. This was in the early 1920s. But to have Helen Keller there! It didn't mean as much, I can tell you that, to the other two in the trio as it did to me, because I don't think they'd made this great hero out of her that I had.

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*[recorded October 24, 1983]

Rowell: The whole idea was that--it was the very early days of radio, and of course we had the strongest radio on the West Coast, so it was a question of whether they could turn the volume up high enough so that she could eventually hear. That was the whole idea. They were just so sure that with earphones on and everything turned up high, that she could hear us, you see.

Was that where they actually took the movie? I've forgotten. They brought the movie machine either there or at a later place. A movie machine, which was unusual in those days, a whole movie outfit--taking pictures of this great event of Helen Keller. (And it doesn't turn out that way quite.)

But anyway, she was just wonderful. She came into the studio, and she was just as lovely and wonderful as I thought she would be. We were so excited playing for her. They turned the music up and up and up and up. And the horrible thing was when she didn't hear anything. She really didn't.

But she did hear vibrations--I mean she did feel vibrations. So she insisted on getting down on her hands and knees in front of me and holding her hands on my cello like this and then asking me to play different things, and her face would just light up. Just little old tunes like "Annie Laurie" and all that kind of stuff. And "Yankee Doodle" or something like that that had rhythm to it. She would put her hands right there and then feel the vibrations of the music. I don't know how she did it. To me that was just a moment in history, to have her right there on her knees in front of my cello, you see!

Of course we went down to see the movie, and they had everything except a shot of me. You can see the shot, but you can't see me. [laughter] I was very disappointed. Because that was in a regular movie theater that they showed it, and there I wasn't. [laughter]

I always remembered her. A kinder memory of somebody I haven't got. It was just lovely for me.

VII SUZUKI INFLUENCE

[Interview 5: October 11, 1982]##

Marriage, Chamber Music Playing

Riess: Among your papers I found this clipping. [reads] "Mrs. Rowell scoffs at the theory that professional women should not marry if they desire to continue their activities. It is her fervent contention that never has she felt more in the spirit of her work, which includes both radio and private instruction, since her marriage."

Rowell: Yes. I still believe that, just as much as I did then, and that was quite a while ago, as you can tell by the picture and the black hair I had.

Riess: Were you really ready to give up being a performer?

Rowell: It wasn't a question of that. It wasn't a question of either or. As I was saying before, I felt the need so much to have more in my life than just broadcasting hours a day and preparing for that. It seemed to me that I was missing a great deal of what I had when I went to college, which was studying and enlarging my life outside of music.

I think that I was very, very ready for marriage. Not with the idea of giving up all music, which I did not do, but with the idea of experiencing what I hadn't experienced before and enjoying that. Oh, I wouldn't have gone without it for anything in the world!

Riess: You said earlier that your husband had--I think you actually used a word like "forbidden."

Rowell: Oh no. He didn't forbid me to do anything. He was the kindest, most gentle person you could possibly imagine. I guess I did say that he didn't want me to earn my living or be a real professional musician, in that sense of the word, after we were married.

That was perfectly all right with me. I was ready for it. I enjoyed chamber music much more than solo playing. I didn't play with the professional musicians with whom I played with before, but Berkeley was full of fine players.

I would like to mention one of them particularly because not only was she a beautiful violinist, she was such a lovely human being. It was a wonderful thing to go from our violinist, Frances Shorr, whom I adored, to Barbara Lull Rahm. She had just come out from the East. Roger Sessions brought her out to be the concert master of the UC Symphony. I knew very little about her past. Immediately we began playing together, trios and quartets and everything.

She had studied with Leopold Auer. Leopold Auer was the teacher of, I can't begin to say all the people. Among them are Jascha Heifetz, [Efrem] Zimbalist, Mischa Elman, Toscha Seidel, Mischel Piastro and Jose Knitzer, Kathleen Parlow, one of the greatest women violinists, and Barbara Lull Rahm.

Barbara Lull Rahm--I put the Lull in there because I went with her to a master class conducted by Henri Temianka. She was going to play for him and he would coach her. We went over together. A couple of other violinists played first. Then she got up, put her music on the rack and started to play. He saw the name Barbara Lull. He said, "What's that music doing here?"

She said, "That's mine."

He looked and he said, "You aren't Barbara Lull?"

She said, "Yes."

He said, "You should be giving this class, not me." Then he turned to the audience and said, "I can remember time after time in New York, the theater having her name in great big letters like this across. Barbara Lull."

She was a very great musician and soloist. She married a mathematics professor at Princeton. She had two lovely sons, but evidently it was not a happy marriage. When it broke up she practically had a breakdown. It was at that time that Roger Sessions, who knew what a magnificent musician she was, took her in hand and told her to come on out to Berkeley. That's the reason she did.

Rowell: We were very dear, close friends. It was always a pleasure to be with her and to play with her. She died about three or four years ago from a terrific cancer which she'd had for a long time. I've never seen anybody combat it and go through it the way she did. She was an inspiration to me the whole time.

Riess: Did she teach while she was here?

Rowell: Teach? Oh, yes. She had excellent students.

Teaching Teachers of Cello

Riess: Everyone teaches, don't they?

Rowell: It's interesting. You know, I'm awfully glad you bring that up. When I went to San Francisco State I went there specifically because I was so interested in teaching. I thought I would teach the teachers, I mean the cellists coming in who were going out, basically, to teach public school which was taught so poorly. They didn't want me to do anything of the kind. They didn't want me to do a thing except teach their students how to play solos. They didn't want any of the teaching angle of it at all. I couldn't understand it. I finally gave a course and had the public school teachers come in, after school, and I just gave it to them. I thought it was terrible not to reach them.

At the [San Francisco] Conservatory for all these years it has been the same thing. They get absolutely nothing on teaching. You go to a conservatory and you graduate. The thing you have to have to graduate is four concertos under your belt and a whole lot of sonatas, and that type of thing. But nothing of teaching.

Irene Sharp and I got so disturbed about that five or six years ago, that we asked if we could give a course. We gave just a six week course, one evening a week, and had a wonderful time doing it. Thank goodness it did bring in the people from the outside. I remember one gentleman who came down from near Fresno every week to attend the class. I am now getting his pupils back and they are very good.

We did teach a course for conservatory students. They got less out of it because they weren't quite prepared for it. But every year we were saying, "We must do that again," because it really was a good course. What we did was, we took a six-year-old, who had never had a cello lesson in her life and never seen a

Rowell: cello. The first evening we put that cello in her hands and actually started her in front of the class. We did ask one of the students in the class to go over with her during the week what we had given in the class--meet her once during the week and give her that.

We did that for the six weeks and she blossomed. (I've forgotten which one of the Eastern conservatories she's at right now.) By the end of those six weeks she was playing a Vivaldi sonata absolutely in tune, with good quality, not just in first position--as we like to call it--but with a knowledge of her instrument. I think everybody in the course was surprised because she had not had a cello in her hands until the beginning of that course. And I think the teachers who had been teaching were the ones who benefitted the most from that course.

Riess: When you say that the pupils at the conservatory weren't ready, do you mean that they weren't ready to accept the fact that they were going to be teachers and not soloists?

Rowell: No, I don't mean that. I mean that, until you have taught, you don't lay emphasis upon that starting which is so important. It would be as if you haven't had children and you read about childbirth, it doesn't mean much to you until you actually have either seen it or experienced it, or know something about what it is.

I think it's the same with--I call it the birth of a cellist. I think it's a very important--I won't call it traumatic--experience that can be a very wonderful one, or a very sad one for a child. I think a child can expect to think they're going to enjoy the instrument, and then have such a technically rough beginning that they aren't as interested as they thought they were going to be. To have them love it at the very beginning is so important.

Riess: Is that a reasonable age to begin, six?

Rowell: A very wonderful age. I didn't used to begin that age. I always chose the age nine as being just about right, because they could have a large instrument at that time. I'd never started them on the smaller instruments, basically because I wanted them to have at least a year of piano first. When they had piano I felt they could do better.

Mr. Suzuki Visits

Rowell: But I changed my idea on that. Mr. Shinichi Suzuki is one who helped me change it. For the violin he starts them young. It's wonderful to start them young on the cello. They have cellos down now to eighth and sixteenth size. Little tiny things. I had a seven-year-old cellist here last night and kept him for over an hour. He was just adorable. Did I tell you about him yet?

Riess: Well, you said that he'd been brought by his teacher.

Rowell: I thought it was awfully nice of his teacher to want me to see him and to give him a lesson. He played very well, all over the instrument.

Riess: Eighth and sixteenth size means what? It can't be 1/16th of the size of normal.

Rowell: Oh, yes. My cello is about that long [gestures]. This cello is about that long [gestures]. They're little, tiny things just about this high. They have to sit in little, tiny chairs.

Riess: How amazing! It really works?

Rowell: Yes. They didn't used to make tiny instruments like that. I never saw them when I was taking. Half size and three-quarter size, yes, but I never saw an eighth or a sixteenth when I was young. They make them a great deal now in both Japan and China, since they are such centers for string music.

Riess: But the students still have that feeling of wrapping their arms around the instrument?

Rowell: Exactly the same. The beginning is exactly the same. The whole thing is the same.

Riess: When did you first come into contact with the Suzuki method? You've mentioned Mr. Suzuki before, with some reverence. I'd like to hear more.

Rowell: I should say so. He really did create something. When a person is idolized, there is always the opposite. So there were these two, pro and con Suzuki. I grew up right in the midst of it.

Riess: In the midst of two groups?

Rowell: A great antagonism and a great love. These two things.

Rowell: I heard that he was coming. Our American String Teachers Association, which has done so much for me, was having a meeting in San Mateo and he was coming. That's all we knew, that he was coming. Nobody had heard him or heard his children. I went over there. These little tiny kids, five and six, running around with those little, tiny violin cases--of course, these were all violinists--they were so happy, running and running, and then very seriously started to play. He was with them. I had never seen anything like it in my life. They had such a good time.

He had done in Japan with the violin what I had done over here with the cello, and that was to teach through body movement--the body was the center--without their realizing it in any way. For instance, he would have them bend their knees while they played. He would have them hold the violin with a very easy neck so that they had both hands free. The way they did that was to do a folk dance, practically, or hold the other person's hand. Instead of having all those tight grabbed hands, their hands were free. I still have loads of Suzuki exercises that I do for the cello.

Those young children played really magnificently. Not just good. They were magnificent. They had vibrato and quality of tone, could play beautiful music and play it well. Of course, he had chosen extra fine ones, but he believes in starting everybody. He is one, like myself, who does not try them out ahead of time. He believes in training each child to their capacity, and he really believes that every child could learn to play the violin.

Riess: These were Japanese pupils?

Rowell: Yes.

Suzuki Workshop, Illinois

Riess: And this was his first visit to this country?

Rowell: His first visit to this region. I had heard of him before this and had been very much taken with the whole idea of it. But going over and seeing him, I can't tell you, it was one of the biggest experiences of my whole life.

I got my husband excited about it, too, because this was teaching and education, which fascinated him. The next year we went to my husband's fiftieth reunion at the University of Chicago, and then went on down to Illinois, where Mr. Suzuki was giving one of his very first real workshops in the United States for teachers. That was an experience for me.

Rowell: Mr. Paul Rolland was in charge of that. I had no idea that summer that I would be working with him from then on, forever, doing all the cello counterpart of what he was doing. At that time Paul Rolland was taking a movie of these Japanese Suzuki violinists. That movie is still being shown every place.

Riess: Did Mr. Suzuki speak English?

Rowell: Almost no English at all the first few years. He always had a translator. Now, of course, he speaks English quite well.

Riess: When he spoke in San Mateo, did he talk about what he was doing, about the body stuff?

Rowell: You saw what he did. I hate to call it the body, because what he was doing was having them have one heck of a good time, with the feeling that they were dancing and enjoying everything at the same time, shaking hands with somebody and doing this and that.

Riess: But what did he actually say about what he was doing?

Rowell: Well, he didn't say because it was all demonstration. I don't want to take too much time out for this, but let me just say that Mr. Suzuki's own background is a fascinating one. He grew up in Japan and became fascinated with the violin. People found out that he was and sent him to Germany to study, so he was European-trained, by the very best violin teachers in Germany. He had that type of a background, very different from most people, and he came back as an accomplished violinist.

He married a German wife. She is still right there with him all the time. She did a great deal of the translating because she spoke English. During the war they were separated, and he almost died from starvation, illness, from everything, and was in bed for years. It was during that time that he got the whole idea of how to start children, that you should start them, as he would say, just like learning a language.

He believes in a great deal of repetition, more so even than I do. But he says that they should learn the same way, that you start a child young to learn a language; you give them something and they repeat it over and over, and enjoy it. The way a child learns a language is the way he teaches the violin. His great thing is to teach with a great deal of love, and great joy, and he does do that.

The American String Teachers took the idea immediately in hand, teaching it in a class formation. That is not his way. He has a class, but if he does he takes every student privately in it.

Rowell: It is always a one to one thing. If they come clear across the city with their mother and have waited in line to play, then they are discouraged or would not be happy and maybe play one minute and not want to play more, he never would encourage them to play more, that's it for that day. But they hear the other children around them playing and they see what it's all about.

I've seen this happen so often. After they've gotten through playing they'll go over in a corner and two kids will start playing the same thing together. He has them all learning the same little folk songs all the time.

Riess: But it's called individual?

Rowell: The instruction is individual. So, when he gets them together it's I don't know how many thousand. I have a picture of them playing together over in Japan. This sent the wrong impression through the world, that he taught the kids to play in unison. But no. They come together at certain times of the year over there--I think it's much more than a thousand violinists--because they've all learned the same melodies with the same fingering and everything else. It's just as you would learn how to speak a word in the English language, and can come together and say those sentences together because you've memorized them. He's a marvelous philosopher.

After that summer I came back and was so excited about having him. I said, "You just have to have him at San Francisco State, that's all there is to it." I got them all excited there. Dr. [Walter] Haderer went right up to Seattle, Washington, which was the last place he was to be before he flew home, and heard him there and he came back as excited as I was. So, we both had him come to San Francisco State the next year and give a two week workshop--which was a long one for him, it's usually a few days.

We had the two week workshop and it turned out very well. (I have the announcement. I'll try to get it out.) What they insisted on, which rather horrified me, was that Mr. Suzuki take the morning session with all the violinists--and they came from Los Angeles and all over--and I take the afternoon session and turn what he had said in the morning over to the cello in the afternoon.

I had loads of fun doing that. I listened carefully in the morning. I showed that you did exactly the same things on the cello that he had done on the violin. I think this helped people a great deal. I wasn't prepared for it that way. I mean, I had to wait and see what he was going to say and then turn it over.

Rowell: I had my own young students come at that time and illustrate in the afternoon. It was very easy for them to illustrate just exactly what Mr. Suzuki had done in the morning. It wasn't that I was copying what he did. It was, I would say, that we had the same basic principles. And because we had the same basic principles, our teaching was so much alike. We were teaching from inside out.

When it came to the end, he always has this last evening when he has a great big concert. He has even the little ones all playing "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star."

He said, "Oh, you have to have your students on it, too."

I said, "Oh, no. The main thing is violin, not cello."

"You have to."

So, I called up all my students--about fifteen of them--and got them over there. They gave quite a part of the program that night. I had them do some things in unison, together. They did them beautifully. Everybody was quite taken with them.

Irene Sharp was one of them at that time. It was that long ago that she was still studying with me. (Little did I know what a magnificent teacher she would turn out to be. I think she's one of the finest teachers in the whole country.)

Riess: I'm going to stop you and ask a few questions about all of this.

First of all, did it strike you that he had gone through the same experience of an illness, and having to start again?

Rowell: Yes. Very much. It struck me completely, and that it was while he was lying in bed wondering whether he was ever going to do anything again, that he devised his whole program. This struck me always, and we had that very much in common.

I enjoyed him so much that summer. The last evening, when we were having dinner in a private home there, I was sitting on a piano stool. He came over and edged on the piano stool and sat next to me. He finally said, "You know, in the next world I want to take up the cello." I thought that was lovely. He loved the cello very much.

Riess: The string teachers association immediately took to him? Or were there two camps?

Rowell: There were not two camps. I don't think so. I think the music teachers association saw what he had to give, which was so authentic, that they just, all over this country, took him. He would come and give workshops all over. He still comes every summer and gives a big concert in Philadelphia.

It's interesting to me because, I don't know how many years ago, I became interested in the Institute for Human Potential. It's centered in Philadelphia. Dr. Glen Homan is the head of it. They take the brain injured children and work and work with them. They have had a simply marvelous success. They bring them in in their mothers' arms at five years old, unable to walk or do anything, and they do teach them. This is by going step by step, knowing exactly what you're doing. Going very slowly with them and re-teaching them from the very beginning how to use a muscle, how to use things.

Anyway, I was so excited by this way, way back, never thinking of Suzuki with it, but merely doing this with these basically brain injured children who had such great deficiencies. I remember when one of them, who couldn't walk or do anything, finally, after years--I belonged to it that long--became an Eagle Scout. They sent out a letter to everybody: "So-and-so has become an Eagle Scout."

I have a lovely letter from Dr. Homan, telling me to come any time to Philadelphia to see them. He was so interested in what I wrote about being interested. I never dreamed of Mr. Suzuki over in Japan and Dr. Homan getting together, but they got together. Mr. Suzuki is on the board and comes with all his children once a year and gives a big concert in Philadelphia. So the doctor, with his background, and Suzuki, with his musical link, absolutely think as one, which is fascinating.

Suzuki Pro and Con

Riess: Who was against the Suzuki method?

Rowell: The people who are against Suzuki--there are plenty of them. Isaac Stern is one who came out very much against it. They feel that it is repetition, because he considers it, at the early stage, like learning a language, as I've said.

A baby will go, "ma-ma-ma-ma," or "ball-ball-ball," you know. He gets the word in his mouth, and loves that repetition, but an adult does not do that.

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Rowell: Many, many of the concert musicians and conservatory-trained musicians have been very much against Suzuki in the past because he does not teach them to read. He teaches them by ear how to do everything, by ear and by sight.

His whole idea is that before the child takes lessons, the mother takes lessons--no matter if she doesn't know a thing about the violin--and the child sees her working at it. This is not so she'll play the violin, but so she'll understand the principles of it. She has to attend every lesson, and she has to oversee everything at home.

A three year old is his pet age for starting. He doesn't allow them to keep the child at it longer than they enjoy it, but maybe come to it several times a day. She [the mother] and the family help the child at home to be excited about it and to love it. She knows, by going to the lessons, and by having held a violin and tried to play it herself, what it's about.

It is the ear he is training. He trains the ear first in all these folk songs to play absolutely in tune. Every detail is step by step by as slow a step possible that he teaches. Then by the time they're six and they've had three years of instruction is when they start the A-Minor Vivaldi concerto, and they put up the music and begin to read. That's at six years of age, just about the time they would begin learning to read at school.

Here we start it in the fourth and fifth grades. The children already know how to read here, so there is not that thing of starting them entirely with their ear, as you can see. The objection has been that, by starting them that way [Suzuki's way] for several years, you put them in an orchestra and they don't know how to read at all.

I had a hard time because I love Mr. Suzuki and I believe in his principles. And yet, I have to have a child who can read what's out there because I don't think my ear is as beautifully trained as a Suzuki ear to be able to tell with every single folk song without making a mistake. Do you see what I mean?

Riess: Yes.

Rowell: I believe in the two together so much.

This is where Paul Rolland came in. He's the one who brought Mr. Suzuki over to this first workshop. He was so taken by him and his principles. But he saw that it didn't fit into the American

Rowell: system because we don't start that until at least the third or fourth grade in public school. So, that's where he came in with his idea of starting them at that age, partly by ear--partly by reading--with all this dancing and doing everything else at the same time and making the music come through through them, and yet, getting them to read the simplest things at that time, both with and without the music.

Writing Prelude to String Playing, with Paul Rolland

Rowell: That's where I came in. He heard me give a demonstration up in Seattle, Washington. I didn't sleep a wink the night before. I had a terribly bad cold and could hardly talk. But I got up there. I took four of my boys with me. They were eleven and twelve years old. They illustrated absolutely everything for me, all my one-fingered scales, things up in four octaves, and every single kind of thing. The four boys ended by playing the first movement of the Haydn C-Major Concerto in unison, even the cadenzas. They did a beautiful job of it.

I had no idea that Paul Rolland was sitting in the audience. I came home from Seattle with a 104° temperature and went to bed. I don't know how many days later it was that he called me, said that he had heard me and he wanted me to write the books with him. I said, "Oh, no. I'm already under agreement to write one with people at the University of Southern California." Finally, those two publishers got it so that I could do both since one was on a college level and the other on the beginning level.

Riess: What are the books?

Rowell: Well, the book I did with Paul Rolland, he gets most of the credit for, which is the way it always is, and I'm glad he does. I think he's a wonderful person. It's called Prelude to String Playing [Boosey & Hawkes, Publishers, 1972].

Riess: It's your theory written up?

Rowell: Well, it's a great deal my theory. I was excited about it.

The last American String Teacher magazine that I had here said that Paul Rolland was probably the greatest violin teacher that this country has ever had.

Rowell: He lived in Illinois. He was the head of this whole [string teaching] project for the University of Illinois. I lived out here. We never saw each other until I had it all completed. He would send me stuff. I took the whole summer off, which I'd never done, to write it. I had Galen come up and take photographs of cellists playing to illustrate everything. I spent the whole summer working on it, and then sent it back to him.

I should have known more, but I didn't. He said, "Why, Margaret, this isn't the way it should be. You are using words that are too big. Remember you are writing this book for the student."

I thought I was writing it for the teacher! I was giving instructions for the teacher all the time, while he wanted it to be used by the student. This was very, very different. So I had to go completely over it.

For instance, I talked about a buoyant arm and he said no child would know what a buoyant arm is. So I had to change it to a floating arm, or something like that. Any word that I would use that I thought was a good word to use, he said, "Oh, no. We have to change that." Even the whole concept had to be changed.

Riess: Did you agree with his concept of writing this book for the student, anyway?

Rowell: Well, it wasn't whether I agreed with him, it was what I had to do.

I think the book is used almost entirely by teachers; I think it's a teacher's book instead of a student's. It spoiled the book for me. I have never enjoyed the book. I always say, wherever I go, "I'm not happy with it at all."

The other thing was, I knew very little about the photographing for it. Galen spent ages doing it. He would take many pictures, and I would select the one I wanted. Somebody said, "I know all about how to do this." We carefully cut out the little negative and put it next to the picture, and in doing it I think we spoiled half the negatives. Also, he [Paul Rolland] said, "We can't handle them that way. They should be on a line of progress and you should say, 'Number four, number five.'" So, I made it harder for them rather than easier. I'm not at all happy with the way the pictures turned out in the book.

There are many things. My book had to follow exactly the violin book. Where I took up a thing on the left hand side of the page, it had to be exactly at the same time on the same page that

Rowell: he took it up for the violin. It constricted me very much, especially since I have them go into other positions sooner. We, with our larger instrument, can get fewer notes under the hand at one time. Of course, the double bass can't get as much as we can under his hand, and he has to shift oftener. The modern approach makes fluid shifting a necessity, and we start early to give them what I call a "fluid shift."

Anyway, there were many details that didn't fit the picture, to me. It wasn't the way I would love to have started it. It didn't have the overall thing at the beginning. But, at the same time, his ideas and my ideas were the same. It's the different mediums of working. Violin and cello have so much in common. It would be like brother and sister, and yet there are anatomical differences. I never thought of putting it that way, but that's the way it is. They're very important and you just have to acknowledge them.

Riess: Is the book still used?

Rowell: Yes. Where I was last summer quite a number of the people had it. I've used it very little myself.

RiessL Do you receive royalties from it?

Rowell: Very little. I do. But I never felt that it was my book. Paul Rolland got most of the royalty.

I might say that writing the preface had a strange history. He had a wonderful preface to his book, in which he explained how the left page had to do with the left hand, and the right side of every page had to do with the right hand. He told me to write a preface to my book, which I did. I said, "I'll write a preface and you put in your preface so they'll know how to handle the book." He said, "Oh, yes." But when the book came out it just had my preface and not his. So they don't know that the left hand side has to be for the left hand and the right side for the right hand or any of his valuable information of how to use the book.

Operation and Recuperation

Rowell: I had a hard time getting that preface off. As I say, I didn't know it was going to be there, I thought his would be the only one. In the meantime, I was teaching at Stanford, a little bit at UC, and at the San Francisco Conservatory. Also, I wasn't as well as I thought I should be. I'd lost a lot of weight, over a period of time.

Rowell: I went down to the doctor. It had been lots of time since I'd seen him. They took a sample, came back with the bottle and said, "Look here. You stop teaching right now. You've got cancer of the colon and you have to have an operation immediately." I think I took about five days off to prepare for it. My friends were all utterly shocked. I went right in and had the operation at Kaiser Hospital in Oakland.

It was right at that time that Rolland had to have the preface. They all laughed at me, but I sat up in bed the second day after my operation and began writing the preface. I think it was the third day I finally finished it, had somebody type it, and had it sent. So, that's the way the preface got written.

Some of the rest of it I finished writing while I was in the hospital. They only keep you two weeks in the hospital for something like that. My husband then was in a convalescent hospital. I didn't let him know about the operation. (Well, he wouldn't have known about it. He wasn't capable of knowing about it at that time.) But I couldn't see coming home to my house here alone. So I conceived, while I was in the hospital, the idea of going out to his convalescent hospital, which was mainly for the aged people who had some senility.

I told them I would like to come on out. They moved the man out of the room that he was in and I moved out there and spent two fine weeks there with my husband! I was able to be up and around. I wheeled him into his meals and we had meals together in the dining room.

Of course, everybody under the sun came to see me, from some distances and so on. It was just an open house. My room was filled with flowers. I had a wonderful time out there, so by the time I got home I was really on the road to recovery. I look back on it not as a bad experience at all, except that [but for it] I think I would have done a better job, perhaps, on the book.

When I was out there I sent in the final corrections to everything. Paul Rolland had left for Europe and had told me where to send them to, at the University of Illinois. I gave them to a student to mail for me. I never knew, but she didn't put them in a mailbox, and they never got there. So they never had the corrections. [laughter] It wasn't a trash can. It was a bank deposit, something like that, that she put them in. You would have thought they would have sent it on, but they didn't.

The "Basic Points"

Riess: Were there some satisfactions from doing it?

Rowell: I think it was after that that I had to give quite a number of talks and I think that they helped me, finally, in coming down to getting my basic principles, which is the way I like to start rather than the way the book does.

Riess: Is there a body of cello teachers who don't like your method, in the same way that Suzuki's methods were objected to?

Rowell: Oh [laughter] I'm sure there are. The only thing is, Thank God I don't have to know them! They don't have to interfere with me in any way. American String Teacher, for instance, was good enough to name me the "Outstanding Teacher of the Year" for the United States in 1977. Basically, as a teaching method I think it would be the solo performer in teaching--and there are many very fine ones--who might disagree. I'm sure people disagree with it, but that doesn't bother me.

I have not had teachers disagree with it, basically. I think some might disagree, if they hadn't actually seen me doing it and seen the results of starting them by what I call my basic principles.

Riess: Which are?

Rowell: First, the whole before the parts. That's where I was different from Mr. Suzuki. He starts building segment by segment by segment, very, very slowly. Which is marvelous. The people he starts are very firm, very solid. The violinists that he starts in Japan come right over to Juilliard and enter Juilliard and those other conservatories and then go over [to Europe]. They say there are more Japanese concert masters and mistresses in Europe than any other nationality, practically. When they come from our conservatories we take it for granted that they are American. But they've had that other foundation, Korean and Japanese, which is basically Suzuki-oriented.

The cello is such a big, almost cumbersome instrument and we get scared of those upper registers. We think they're far away when we start. I did. I can divide in half the people who started with what would be the method I use--I'm not alone in it--where I have them doing what I call the siren, even though I have them use a tremolo bow and go up and down every string, with their arm leading their hand, and getting all over their instrument. They aren't playing out of tune because they aren't playing any one note,

Rowell: but just getting a tremolo effect, up and down, all over, feeling and hearing their instrument in the highest register. So their arms are used to going there rather than being right in first position where, on the cello, we're likely to have a stuff upper arm without even knowing it.

On the violin you have it right within and your arm reach [sic] the whole distance anyway by having that peculiar hold with the elbow under. People think this is an awkward hold. It isn't at all, on the violin. The elbow turned is one of the most basic marvelous things. I wish every cellist were able to turn his elbow right from the beginning the way a violinist does. Many of them just keep it out straight and just use their forearm in playing, which they don't realize they're doing, and tighten up that upper arm, or at least do not use it as flexibly as the violinist always does. They can't play without a flexible elbow.

Riess: So the "whole" for you is the whole instrument?

Rowell: The whole instrument. I have all my students come, no matter how advanced, and run up and down their instruments completely on every string before they start to play each day.

Then, second, I think getting the overtones first in the child's mind is important, so that they hear the actual vibrations of the instrument and of the tone, to get in tune from the very beginning. It isn't where you put your fingers. It's that you put your fingers with exactly the right feel so that you get the right intonation--the exact centering of the tone--that will produce the overtones. Because every instrument is built on that overtone series.

Riess: Is that a point where you discover that some of your students are tone deaf, or is there no such thing?

Rowell: There's no such thing as tone deaf. I've spent ages and ages trying to get them to hear. There is as much gradation in hearing as there is in seeing. It isn't how well you hear. Beethoven was deaf, and yet, he had to hear every single note before he could compose. What did he hear with? It's that inner ear that is doing the hearing. I can't ever get over that difference of the inner ear being the thing that we're training entirely. Just as the inner eye is the eye of the artists. People with 20/20 vision aren't necessarily the greatest painters. Monet started going blind so early. All those wonderful water lily things were done as he was going blind. So many of the great artists did not have good eyesight. Van Gogh is another one. It's that inner eye and that inner ear that is the artist's home.

Riess: There is something troubling about Suzuki. It's just too intense, to start at three years old. What if they fail?

Rowell: They don't have to continue with it. I think he sees to it that the mother does not try to make him play. As I've seen with him, if the child isn't interested you simply don't teach him at that time. That's all there is to it. The child has to show interest. You cannot manufacture that. That's the reason for the child going and sitting and seeing the mother take lessons first. If the child at that point doesn't want to grab a violin and play, then you don't start him.

Cooperation from a Student's Parents

Riess: How about you and pushy or ambitious mothers? How have you dealt with the mothers?

Rowell: I have dealt with them, yes. That's a good question. I very seldom have had it. I've had such cooperation from parents, I can't tell you what a joy it has been.

Riess: Cooperation in letting the child stop, also?

Rowell: Stop? They almost never stop. I don't have people stop taking cello. The first question I ever ask them I asked this little seven-year-old yesterday. I said, "Do you really love that cello?" He said, "Oh, yes." His face just beamed. I would never teach a person for one week who didn't love the cello. It would be impossible.

Riess: How is it that there are so many children taking piano lessons under duress? They just clomp through their piano lessons.

Rowell: I can't tell you that.

Riess: I should have thought that the same thing would be happening with string instruments--with cellos--and with parents who get it in their mind.

Rowell: I don't know. It may happen. I think it has happened. I remember Eudice Shapiro, one of the fine violinists of our country. We were together one summer, teaching. We had an apartment together and I got to know her. She said she just hated her father when she was young because he was a violinist and he made her practice. She just hated it and him. Now she says, "I love him and can't thank him enough, and he knows it."

Rowell: That, to me, was a revelation. I hadn't run into that. I think that that happens more with violin, and more in Europe, than here--where the parent there says, "You're going to learn this."

Riess: What kind of experience did you have with having to separate the mothers from the students? You know. Help the mothers back off or something like that?

Rowell: I haven't ever had that trouble. I have taken students from other teachers where the difficulty has been entirely the mother. I have had the mother come and sit through the lessons here and I've never had any trouble. I can say that. I can think of two very definite things right now where the other people said they had so much trouble with the mother interfering, wanting too much, this and that and the other thing. I just let the mother sit there, if she wants to. I talk to her sometimes. I consider her a very important human being. I've never, ever run into any difficulty with any parent.

Riess: Interesting. Irene Sharp teaches the same way that you do?

Rowell: Yes. Well, I think she teaches better. [laughter] She has absolute pitch and she has that wonderful sense of intonation. She didn't used to teach as well as she teaches now. She teaches absolutely beautifully.

Riess: And she articulates her teaching methods in the same way that you have?

Rowell: Well, we teach together so much. Every place that we can get to teach together we do, all the European classes and workshops, and most in this country. I would say that I don't think there's any point on which we differ. I don't think there could be. She's been my right hand.

RiessL You were talking about your first principles.

Rowell: Hold the phone just a minute, as they say, and I'll get it for you.

[break in tape]

Riess: Okay. So you'll put your six basic principles of teaching into this later and we won't go through it.

Rowell: Yes.

VIII DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC AT THE UNIVERSITY

Roger Sessions, and John Sessions##

Riess: When you mentioned Roger Sessions that reminded me of the interesting people that were associated with the music department at the university in the thirties and forties.

Rowell: I mentioned that Roger came up and listened to his son take all those lessons, didn't I?

Riess: No.

Rowell: Roger Sessions came to Berkeley [1945-1951]. I knew that he was coming. It was quite a while, it seemed to me, before I met him. Then, when I heard that he had a son who was studying cello I was very interested. Very soon they brought him to me and we had a wonderful time together. Roger always brought him to his lessons, sat in that chair there, and listened to almost all the lessons very attentively. I enjoyed both of them very much.

John had a very good ear. He had such a good ear that he fooled me because he could remember anything that he had heard, practically, and didn't have to practice it because he heard it. Therefore, he did not read music as well as I thought he did. I would go over it very carefully at the lesson and he would remember it rather than reading his music. But he would make mistakes and then he would get furious. It took me a long while to realize that he wasn't reading music as well as he should. He played with a very beautiful quality.

Riess: Did he go on with it?

Rowell: Yes. He gave it up for a while to play tennis. He and Stravinsky's son, or Schoenberg's son, became very good friends down in Los Angeles after they moved away from here. I think they were great tennis

Rowell: players. He was in the Washington, D.C. Symphony the last I heard from him. He's married. I hear from his father every once in a while. He's doing very well with his cello.

Riess: Do you think music really does run in the family?

Rowell: Of course I do. I used to think that with education we could learn anything.

Riess: Yes. Your Dewey exposure.

Rowell: But I do believe very definitely that we can learn music, as I'm always saying, up to our capacity. Everybody can learn it, just as everybody can learn to talk.

As I said earlier, the thing that I can't stand is to say that you shouldn't study music because you aren't going to become a performer. This is what I found back at the Rostropovich National Congress in Washington, D.C. Those professional musicians thought that people shouldn't be studying music if they weren't going to be a professional. Where was there going to be room for all these professionals?

This got me. I was talking with somebody yesterday who was saying how many doctors are so musical. There is a doctors' symphony in San Francisco. When you have the number of doctors who play the violin, who play cello, who play other instruments, I love to see them do it. They get such pleasure out of it and they can be very fine players.

Riess: I have a list that I had taken from a history of the epartment. It mentions some of the people who had been at some point involved with the department. I am sure many of them are people that you would have had contact with.

Rowell: Not necessarily. I did very little with UC.

Charles Cushing, David Boyden, Marjorie Petray, and Ernest Bloch

Riess: Charles Cushing.

Rowell: Charles Cushing I first knew when he was in short pants, in high school, a little boy, and very much of a precocious musician. He wanted everybody to know that he was a musician. He went for one year, I believe, to France, and instead of this little boy in these knee trousers, he came back with a full beard, as I remember. He

Rowell: seemed so dignified, but I still remember him as that little, tiny kid. I knew him all his life, and his wife and children. A lovely family. In fact, his daughter was one of Galen's friends in school.

Riess: And David Boyden? Where did you first meet him?

Rowell: I didn't know David until I was married, but that's over forty-six years now. We've known each other through the years and kept close. I find every place I go, in England particularly, David is so well known for the wonderful book he wrote on the violin. I always come back with messages for David Boyden wherever I am.

Riess: Marjorie Petray?

Rowell: She was beautiful. She went to the same church we did. One of her sons was in my sister's Sunday School class. Marjorie Petray was such a fine pianist. I knew her when she was young, long before she was recognized. I adored her. I can still see her in a red evening dress, playing. I followed her through her whole life.

Riess: Ernest Bloch? [Bloch first taught at Berkeley, spring 1941]

Rowell: Oh. Ernest Bloch! You're on a very touchy point there. If there's any composer who loved the cello and knew how to compose for the cello, and did compose for the cello, it was Bloch! I can't tell you! Here I was, married, and he was teaching at UC and I never went down. I never even sat in on one lecture that he gave. My friends did. They all said how wonderful he was, and that he did everything all around the subject. He took music whole, if anybody ever did. I always heard that.

My friends talked about him at the conservatory, Ada Clement and Lillian Hodgeshead. They were in charge of the San Francisco Conservatory and, of course, I was there. They were very dear friends of Ernest Bloch. In fact, I think they practically put him up over in Marin County. They were always visiting when he would go to all his different places.

I missed out with Bloch entirely, knowing him personally. But, oh, the debt that we cellists owe him! I think his "Schelomo," written for the cello, is one of the greatest pieces ever written. He understands it so completely and he has written that music as nobody else has ever written for the cello. All his many short Jewish pieces--"Prayer" and "Meditation"--are just meant for the cello.

Riess: You didn't get down there because you were newly married?

Rowell: I think it was when Galen was just a baby and I did so much running up and down the hill. I always had to transport everybody. We were the highest up on the hill so I drove everybody with a kid, between here and nursery school. When Galen was eighteen months old he started. And from then on! There were no busses, of course, around here. So, the only way to get around was to drive. I picked up the other kids and went. I spent a great deal of time on that.

Ed Rowell's Eyesight Fails, Operations

Rowell: Ed's eyes did begin to go bad on him very early so he didn't like to drive. (He taught me to drive, in fact.) A year after we were married we first went to Mexico. It was really a remarkable trip. It made me know that Ed loved to travel so much. But on the way back he was agitated to a certain extent. We did change off driving. It was his eyes that were beginning to trouble him. Very soon he had to have four different operations on his eyes. Two on glaucoma which had completely destroyed one eye. By the time he got out of the hospital on one eye, the other eye had begun to go. As soon as he was able to he had to go back and have the other glaucoma operation, which saved some sight in that. It started after we came back from Mexico that year after we were married.

After that the cataracts began growing. I didn't worry as much about them as I should have, because Ed was never one to complain. But what happened was that they grew on top of the scars of the glaucoma. They really got very bad and he kept going to the doctor all the time. One day he said, "I have to go to San Francisco. They're having a consultation of doctors." I let him go across on the ferry boat all by himself to UC hospital. I met him when he got back. Low and behold, they had said that his eyes were very serious, he would go completely blind, and there was no chance of an operation.

That was a stunner to me, completely and totally. It was to him, too, of course. But he did the wisest thing anybody ever did. He could always think things through. He had already lost the sight of one eye completely, and there was just that little bit in the other one. He said to his doctor, Dr. Owen Dickson--who by the way was a beautiful cellist and I knew him long before we were married, when he was just a boy--"What would you think if you operated on the bad eye and saw what the conditions were back behind it, and then saw whether you thought you could operate on the good eye?" (They had refused to operate on the good eye and spoil it.)

Rowell: So, that's what they did. That cataract operation in those days was so different from today. I think I suffered more through that than I have through anything I've ever been through myself, including my cancer operation and my TB. With the cataract you had to be sure that he never moved his head from one side to the other, twenty-four hours a day for--I think he was in the hospital about two weeks before he could come home. That was the hardest thing. I had special nurses for him for twelve of the twenty-four hours. I tried to take the other twelve. Of course, I was trying to manage Galen at home and a little bit of teaching. Those twelve hours I did with Ed, trying to keep that head in place, were really something! I was completely exhausted and run down from that experience.

Riess: You were actually holding him so that he wouldn't move?

Rowell: You kept those two pillows on each side--they were more than pillows; they were hard--against there. If you saw him beginning to move you would jump. He knew how quiet he had to be. But it was while he was sleeping that you had to be so careful.

We got through the first operation fine, which was the one on the eye he had already lost. Then came the one on the good eye. Even with all our help it began to rupture a little bit, as I remember, which was terrible. And he became so ill in the middle of one night there. I think it was the exertion of everything. His whole stomach began to be completely distended. He was in such agony that you can't possibly imagine it. By the time we got doctors in there they said that it was an extremely serious thing and they finally gave him relief.

One of the things he had to have right then was an enema. The orderly walked in, holding that great big enema, the whole tray with it. He looked at Ed and said, "Oh, Professor Rowell! I was your student!"

Ed, deathly sick as he was, said, "Oh, what grade did I give you? I hope that I gave you an A?" [laughter] We just howled at that.

After he came home from that second one, I wanted to get him something on the way home that he could appreciate. He couldn't see any flowers, he couldn't read, he couldn't do anything. I remembered how much he loved horseradish. He always put horseradish on everything. We even laughed one day when he insisted, when we had a whole lot of company, on carrying it to the nth degree by putting horseradish on his ice cream! That was just for the fun of it.

Rowell: So, I stopped the car on Telegraph Avenue and thought, "I'm going to run in and get him a bottle of horseradish." I went into the store--really, I can't see how these things happen--and they said, "No. We don't have any horseradish." Just at that moment the man came in delivering things and he was delivering a whole tray of horseradish, twelve or twenty-four bottles.

I said, "Oh, I want one of those."

He said, "No, I'm sorry, I can't spoil the tray."

I said, "I have to have it." So I bought the whole thing and took it out. We had more fun with that horseradish! I think it lasted for years and I gave it away to all my friends. That was the only way I could get horseradish in a hurry. I didn't want to keep Ed waiting in the car.

That was such a long siege. When he had later operations and was in Kaiser for other things, or when I was, and saw people being operated on for cateracts and sitting up within two or three days, I couldn't believe it. And going home at the end of a week! This was such an operation! I thought, when we finally took the bandages off, that he would see well, but he didn't. It took so long for anything to come back.

Riess: How old was Galen when all that was going on?

Rowell: Let me see what year that would have been. Ed retired in '52. Galen would have been eleven then. He was probably eight or nine.

At that time I did take over Ed's classes for him a little bit. I remember giving them their examinations and correcting all their Blue Books and things for it.

Riess: His classes at Cal?

Rowell: Yes. I think I only did it a couple of days--gave them assignments and did that kind of thing. I would read him the Blue Books, but he said, "Oh, you go ahead. I'm too tired." Those students don't know who they got correcting them. [laughter] But I think I did all right.

Riess: Actually, you told me last week about other travels. He wanted you all to go to the East Coast because you had never done that. That was after he was unable to see as well?

Rowell: Yes, but he didn't go with us, you see.

Rowell: I used to drive to his home in Minnesota almost every summer with Galen and himself. At first we used to divide off on driving. But the last few times I had to do it on my own. I didn't like that long drive at that particular time. He didn't see well enough to see the signs. I tried to get Galen to look out for the signs. My eyes are not that good at all. I have fairly decent glasses for distance now, but for the last few years I haven't been able to see street signs.

Riess: And that trip you took to the East Coast with Galen and the frying pan? [see p. 210]

Rowell: That was just the two of us. At that time, I think I may have mentioned, we spent so much time at the different quarries along the way.

Riess: Because he was so interested in rocks.

Rowell: Yes.

Riess: I liked the way you described cooking in your frying pan. You would start out by boiling water for coffee, then you would toast the bread, heat the milk, and then you would poach the egg.

Rowell: It was great fun! I still have the same frying pan and use it for everything.

Other Names from Music Department History

Riess: Well, I've certainly taken us off on a tangent.

Rowell: Don't you want a coffee break?

Riess: I really prefer to do that at the end.

Rowell: All right.

Riess: Winifred Howe? Is that a name you know?

Rowell: Oh, yes. She was in music. I almost forgot her. I didn't know her that well. I don't remember much about her, I'm sorry to say. Who else have you got?

Riess: Randall Thompson?

Rowell: Yes. He was a visiting professor and has done much composing.

Riess: Arthur Bliss.

Rowell: Arthur Bliss was lovely. He came from England. He was Sir Arthur Bliss after that.

Two of my very dear friends in the Berkeley Piano Club with me, Wanda Krasoff and Margaret Goard, were going to play his concerto in San Francisco at one of the big theaters. I'll never forget this. They had prepared. They were both beautiful musicians, both playing and teaching now. He coached them on the concerto after he came. They had been so careful in learning it. He had made many tempo changes and he put them all in very specific [terms]: 60 to a quarter note, 120 to a quarter note, 148, and so on. He had every single thing down right like that. So they had been very specific, knowing that he was going to come and coach them in it.

He changed everything. He said, "Oh, I don't mean that like that. Just go right from that into here." "Do this, do that." He was very free, he wanted it to flow rather than obey specific tempo markings. It was a great lesson to me. It came just at the right time of my life, just exactly the right time.

Riess: What was the lesson there?

Rowell: The lesson was that the composer wants you to play the music. He's giving you an indication, but it is not a rule. Even his tempo marks are not rules. He made them change their tempos from what he had written in there.

The same thing I found, I think I mentioned, with Roger Sessions. I remember when he was playing the Beethoven F-Major Sonata with John. It starts with a thirty-second note on the upbeat. Then, when it comes to the next time it's a sixteenth note.

Roger started out with an eighth note at the beginning. I said, "Roger, just look at that. That's a thirty-second." He said, "I know it is, Margaret, but Beethoven didn't mean it that way. That's a mistake." [laughter] I've never gotten over that, but I've never been able to get anybody else to play it as a sixteenth note instead of a thirty-second.

Colin Hampton, and the Griller Quartet, 1948

Riess: The last thing on this particular list is the Griller Quartet.

Rowell: Oh, well of course. The Griller Quartet were absolutely part of myself, completely and totally. I think they came here, if I remember correctly, on a tour before. We were having dinner. Somebody in the department called me, I don't know who, and said, "Margaret, can you come down to Wheeler Hall? I want you to hear this quartet tonight." I went down and the Griller Quartet was playing such as I'd never heard before. I thought they were the greatest thing I'd ever heard. They said, "We're considering having them come here for a whole year." I said, "It couldn't possibly be better." Surely enough, they did come the next year.

I really think that, as far as quartets go, that quartet was simply remarkable. You may know that they all studied at the Royal Academy in London. Colin [Hampton] didn't take up the cello until he was fourteen, the same age I was when I started. They were such wonderful students together that it was the idea at the conservatory over there to put them together as a quartet.

They became so excited about it, as I remember, the four of them lived together in a train car that was vacant, and practiced hours and hours a day. When they were still in the conservatory there, they became the best known quartet, then, in England. During the war they gave all those wonderful concerts, underground. They became beloved of all of England.

When they came here they had such richness of quality. They were four beautifully matched players. However, I do think that Colin Hampton, the cellist, is the outstanding one of them. I think he is one of the greatest quartet cellists who ever lived. He's still living right here in Berkeley.

I thought he had the most beautiful quality. I thought he was simply wonderful. Very soon after they moved here--my two outstanding students at that time were Bonnie Hampton, Bonnie Bell at that time, and John Sessions--and I got up my courage--I didn't tell them--and I called Colin up and said I'd like to bring them down to play for him.

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Rowell: They both played very well. I think Bonnie played the Saint-Saens concerto, and John played something very beautiful with that clear ear that he has. I said to Colin, "Would you like to take them?" and he said, "I most certainly would." I've always been glad I did it.

About three or five students--I don't know how many--I handed over to him. They all wanted to go to him. So I lost several of my very best students at that time. He never asked me whether I wanted the other ones to go or not. That was all right, but I thought, "Oh, my sakes, am I ever going to get any good students again?" because it does take a long time to build up a good student.

Rowell: We were very friendly. I adored the whole quartet. I did play in a string quartet at that time that took some coaching from Sidney Griller himself.

Colin was looking for places to live. Bonnie Bell's mother lived in a great, huge place on Hillegass. She had rooms to rent, so she rented a room to Colin Hampton. He was right there to teach Bonnie, which he did for years. Of course, I could see it coming, that Bonnie was in love with him and he was in love with her. I've forgotten how old she was when she married. They were married right in front of my fireplace here, and they were very happy for quite a number of years.

Riess: When the quartet was brought by the university, the expectation was that they would be available to students?

Rowell: Universities had much more then than they have now, and it gave a university status to have a quartet or a trio in residence. That's very much done in the Eastern universities. The Beaux Arts Trio was always associated with a conservatory, I believe. The only way they could survive was to have a university pay their salary, and UC paid the Grillers a good salary.

Riess: And what did they do for their salary?

Rowell: They did a little bit of teaching and some coaching. Of course, they were giving concerts all the time. It was before Zellerbach Hall was built. It was Hertz Hall mainly.

I must put this down. I remember with Hertz Hall when they called me up and said, "Will you come on down?" They were just finishing it and putting those wooden things in at the sides. Those are actually moveable, a little bit, and they wanted to be sure they got just the right resonance from all those things on the side. I loved that. We were listening to a string quartet that night--I can't tell you who it was--when they were trying to adjust the sound in Hertz Hall. I think it's a beautiful hall.

Riess: You say, "They called me down to Hertz." Who's they?

Rowell: Somebody at the university. Of course, David Boyden was the head of it for so long. I think it was he.

Riess: How would you characterize the music community in Berkeley over the years?

Rowell: It's always been very much a music center. I remember when I was young, long before I was married, when I was living in Oakland--this was when Owen Dickson was playing a lot of cello, it may have

Rowell: been before that--somebody wanted to locate their son, a cellist playing in a quartet, and didn't know where he was that evening. They called up somebody but they answered, "Oh, we've got a quartet going but he's not here." So they called up the next person--"No, we've got a quartet going here, but he's not here."

I would say that that was the era of string quartet playing in Berkeley. Berkeley was a hothouse of it; it was a center of chamber music, and basically string quartets. Sterling Hunkins is the name of a very fine cellist here who was in a quartet, who went East to become famous. I can't tell you how many cellists had played string quartets here and then went on to really become very fine musicians.

This was before we had as many recordings as we have now. You didn't spend your time watching TV or listening to recordings. You made music in the evening, and you made it.

Riess: What group did you play with? You said you were playing with a string quartet.

Rowell: I've forgotten whether that was Barbara Lull Rahm. Some of the time I was with Beulah Logan. She's still playing.

I remember playing piano quartets, which would be piano, violin, viola and cello. The pianist, Alice Miller, just adored the Griller Quartet, is still playing. Last Wednesday I went for the first time in years to a Piano Club meeting. There she was. I said, "How old are you now?" She is ninety-four. Right there, going to it, still playing piano.

Riess: Did you play up here usually?

Rowell: No, not here. I usually went out to somebody's house, so as not to bother Ed.

Riess: So that would happen about once a week?

Rowell: Yes.

Riess: At least?

Rowell: Yes. That I would call the "housewives quartet," even though they were all members of the Piano Club.

Riess: Now, more of the notable names: Albert Elkus.

Rowell: Albert Elkus. He was a dear. He's the one who came before David Boyden. After he was at UC he became president of the San Francisco Conservatory and was wonderful at that. I think he was simply excellent at handling people. He had--I hate to use the word--a sweet disposition, but it really was that.

He knew more about the Beethoven quartets than anybody I knew, so I got him, after he was retired, to come back to the University Extension and give a course in Beethoven quartets, which I loved to listen to.

Riess: Was he responsible for getting the money for Hertz Hall?

Rowell: I don't know. Listen. I don't know anything about money or anything about those things. It couldn't interest me less. I have no idea.

String Quartet*

Riess: Margaret, I want to hear more about string quartets, which ones you particularly admired, and followed.

Rowell: I'm just fascinated by the growth of the interest in string quartets in this country. I remember the summer before Galen was born going to the full series of the Pro Arte Quartet at Mills College. They were doing a whole Beethoven series. They came out every year from Belgium and stayed the whole summer at Mills College. I thought that was wonderful. There were not then the visiting quartets, as for instance the University of California has had continually during the years.

The string quartet has developed from something which a few professional men did, usually in Europe, to something which every young person developing as a violinist, violist, or cellist heads toward now. Every conservatory is proud of its string quartets. There are string quartet competitions all over the world in this era. I feel it is the finest form of instrumental music that there is. There is nothing in the brass or woodwind section, in any part of the orchestra, that can compare to a string quartet. I always loved a trio, but a string quartet is perfection. There's just nothing to equal it.

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*[recorded October 24, 1983]

Rowell: In a trio the piano has a different quality of tone which is the opposite--it is a percussive instrument, and the strings are not. It can blend in its own way, but it's like two opposites. The string quartet is an absolute blend of four equal people; usually in a trio the pianist tends to give a nod or tends to lead a little bit, or else the first violinist does, but a string quartet is the complete democracy of playing. It is the perfect unit; there are four absolutely equal players, and one takes the lead, then the other, they pass it to each other. And they have to be absolutely in tune with each other.

The conservatories devote a great deal of time to producing string quartets and coaching them and getting them ready for competitions and everything else. Our conservatory has one I think two times a year for the whole United States.

Riess: How about the trio form? Do they coach trio?

Rowell: A trio is also coached, and trio in my day almost did more than quartets. But I would say a quartet has much surpassed a trio in its popularity with the general audience, and it is a higher form, to me, of musicianship. Though I adore a trio, of course. The Beaux Arts trio is my ideal of one. It's had its--I don't know what--twenty-fifth, thirtieth, fortieth anniversary and is still playing. And it's just beautiful. Those two forms are going right down in history.

IX FOCUS ON THE MOUNTAINS, RELIGION, PEACE, HOME, MOTHERHOOD, FRIENDS

Yosemite One Snowy June

Riess: Well, then let's turn to something you do like to talk about. You wanted to get in some tales of your early climbs, didn't you?

Rowell: Oh! Now you're right down my alley. I really think that those summers mean more to me than anything, probably, that has happened in my whole lifetime.

I think I mentioned to you that my sister Marion and I used to go to Yosemite together. She had a Model A Ford which she ran. But we went in there one earlier summer, before she had a car, by train, and we saw these people coming down a trail, above Nevada Falls, with donkeys. They looked dirty and dusty and tired, and we said, "Oh, wouldn't that be wonderful to do!"

Marion was five years older than I and teaching at University High School. The next year she came home one day and said, "Well, how would you like to take one of those trips?" I said I surely would love it. What had happened was that Leonarde Keeler went to University High School, Leonarde and his sister, Eloise Keeler. Their father was Charles Keeler, the poet and writer who was a great friend of John Muir's and went to Alaska with him. He was considered one of the Berkeley writers and painters--Keeler, Sterling, Keith, Bret Harte, Twain.

He had three children. Eloise was younger than Leonarde. She said, "Oh, brother, I'm going on that trip with you."

He said, "Oh, no you aren't."

She said, "Come in. Look here. I've got my things right here. I went out and bought them. I'm going out on that trip with you."

Rowell: He said, "I'm sorry. It's a boy's trip and you are not allowed on it."

Anyway, he finally said, "Well, I'll tell you. If you get a bunch of girls together beforehand, I'll take you out before we take our trip." That satisfied her.

In those days there wasn't any such thing as backpacking. There were no dried foods. Nobody ever thought of carrying everything on their back. You had to have animals to carry your food--your hams and your bacons and your canned goods and your heavy sleeping bags and such.

Well, I don't know whether it was Narde or Eloise who asked Marion at school if she would be interested in going, because she was teaching physical education and she was a favorite of all the people there. She came home and asked me. It didn't take me one split second. Even though I was on KGO, and broadcasting all the time without time off, this was far enough ahead of time so that I could say I was going to take a vacation.

We started counting on it right away. It turned out to be my sister and myself, and two other sisters--both teachers, eight of us. Two, four, six, and then the two boys to lead us, Leonarde Keeler and Ralph Brand. I think we paid something like sixty dollars apiece for it, which seemed like an awful amount.

June was a lovely time of the year to start out in the High Sierra. I went early to Yosemite to stay with some of my friends and got there about the twelfth or thirteenth of June. The rest arrived on the sixteenth, and it was snowing, even on the floor of the valley on the sixteenth. Just a little bit. Of course, it dried right up.

Leonarde knew that he could rent animals right there in the valley, and was counting on getting them. But he didn't realize that, since we were going to climb from Yosemite to Huntington Lake over a hundred miles, we would have to bring the animals all the way back. That would be another long journey. We wanted to get rid of them down there. No, there was nothing doing. We had to buy them.

There was a great commotion over that, because the other two sisters weren't going to pay anything more. They had paid their fee and that was what the fee was. We had to buy these animals at sixty dollars apiece, as I remember. Marion and I went right in--I guess we all did, finally--and bought the animals right then and there and set out, supposedly to go to Huntington Lake.

TUESDAY EVENING
JULY 15, 1924

Climbs Mountain

MISS ELOISE KEELER, co-ed and daughter of Berkeley's well known poet, who has added laurels as mountain climber to those won by her in world of art.

GIRLS DARE DEATH TO SCALE PEAK

U. C. Co-eds Among Group of First Women to Reach Top of Hermit Mountain, Altitude of 12,500 Feet

BERKELEY, July 15.—To a group of Berkeley girls, including several University of California students, belongs the honor of being the first women to scale Hermit mountain, treacherous peak of the high Sierra region in the Evolution basis country, south of Yosemite valley.

As far as is known the peak, which rises to an altitude of 12,500 feet, has only been scaled on one other occasion. That was last year when Leonarde Keeler, son of Managing Director Charles Keeler of the Chamber of Commerce, made the perilous ascent. This year young Keeler was the leader of a party of girls who braved hardships and real dangers to penetrate the heart of the rugged mountain country.

CO-EDS AMONG HIKERS.

In the group of mountain climbers were Eloise Keeler, sister of young Keeler, and a university student; Marjorie Sanborn of Berkeley, also a co-ed; Miss Orpah Hart, daughter of Howard Hamilton Hart, Alaska millionaire, whose Claremont home is one of the show places of the Eastbay; Miss Nancy Adams of Los Angeles, Miss Irene Henley, teacher in the Berkeley schools, and Miss Marian Avery, well-known cellist.

So steep was the rise of the mountain that ropes were necessary to aid in the climb over the "chimney" formation which makes its ascent a difficult feat. Sharing leadership with young Keeler, an ardent mountaineer, as guide of the party was Ralph Brand, another young Berkeleyan. The party passed over the 12,000-foot John Muir pass, one of the less frequented beauty spots of the Sierra region, and made its way home by Huntington lake and Fresno.

ONLY ONE MISHAP.

But one mishap marked the walking tour and this occurred when Miss Sanborn, stumbling over a rock, broke a toe. Fortunately the party boasted one horse used as a pack animal and Miss Sanborn mounted its back for the comparatively few miles remaining fore the trip was ended at Fr

This is the second walkin of the high Sierra region taken by Keeler this seaso terest his young friend wilderness regions of th state. He had just retu a party of boys when h sembled a group of fa climbers for him to g Keeler has gone to

TO MOBILIZE FENSE SEPT. 12

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*This was Margaret Avery; Marion Avery was also one of the group.

Rowell: We did have a trip of trips! I'll never forget a moment of it in my life, getting them packed and starting out on the trails, going up over Vernal Falls and then over Nevada Falls. We didn't get started until the middle of the day because of all the commotion of getting off, so we had to camp just back of Cloud's Rest.

We woke up in the morning to find our animals gone. They had just run right straight down to the valley again. [laughter] So we had to wait while Narde went down to the valley to get them and bring them back, which of course took a great part of the day.

Where we stopped that night was absolute snow every place. We finally found one rock that stuck up from the snow to put the animals on, and another rock to put our sleeping bags on, built a big fire, and went down for the night. I think it was then that I put my shoes, sopping wet, out by the fire to dry and, of course, burned the whole front part of my shoes off! [laughter] They tried to put adhesive around them in some way and have me have something, because we were in snow from then on, day and night, but the front part of those shoes were off and that was all there was to it. I did have another pair of something that I slipped into for the rest of the trip, because those were unusable.

I had just graduated from college. I was going to be dressed right for this trip, especially with two boys along. So I had made myself a gingham dress. I was very proud of it. It was very neatly made. It looked marvelous on me. I wore corsets so, of course, I brought my corset along, my shoes and stockings and everything.

Well, in the night the boys got up and dug a grave and buried my corset and my wonderful dress, my pet dress. They buried that dress! I brought it along because it was good-looking! [laughter] So I started out the next day in my pants--what did we call those things that bloom out here like riding pants? And my long stockings and a pair of shoes that, as I remember, gave out almost instantly on me.

We started out that next morning across the snow and that was when I found out about Flopsy. We had one horse, a little tiny burro, and two mules, four animals to carry everything. Our sleeping bags at that time were awfully heavy. And I remember the hams that got awfully smelly by the time you got through to them, but were still good to eat.

The next few days were really something. Flopsy, we named the first day out because we didn't realize that they'd sold us an animal as old and as decrepit as she was. She would trudge along

Rowell: in the snow for a little bit and then just flop right straight over on her side, with all her baggage on her. We'd have to take it off, and stand her up, and then repack her. That repacking was never done quite as well as packers would. I remember repacking her twenty times one day, which was an awful lot.

Riess: With all of this, was it fun?

Rowell: Oh, it was! You wouldn't think it was fun. I know what my son means now by climbing. He just climbed Kilimanjaro last week. Now, whether that's fun or not, I can't tell you, but it is an experience, and it's an experience you'll never forget and you wouldn't take anything under the sun for it.

Everybody said, "Oh, I wonder if he will climb Kilimanjaro when he's over in Africa?" Well, yes, but I didn't expect him to climb up and down in one day, because they have those places where you stay overnight on the way up. But he did it. Whether it was fun, I can't tell you. But I know the joy he had in doing it.

Riess: Was it unusual, for young women to be doing this trip?

Rowell: Yes, and no. When you see the pictures of the Sierra Club from 1900 with mobs of women with their great big long skirts on, hiking in the most unusual places, riding side saddle, going into all of these out of the way places, you realize that with the Sierra Club, with things like that, it was not unusual. It was, perhaps, unusual for four to go off, or six of us to get off alone, but it was not at all unusual for people to go into the Sierra.

Riess: You mean in larger bands?

Rowell: Not more than one group a summer, maybe, in the Sierra. You didn't meet people when you went. In my whole time out we never met anybody.

Riess: Why were you not a member of the Sierra Club?

Rowell: I had heard of the Sierra Club but it didn't have the meaning for me at that time. I thought it was just for older people. I remember that two of my friends said that they would put my name into the Sierra Club. (You had to have your name put in and be passed on.) I'd never thought of it as anything that you did yourself. I thought you had to be asked.

It wasn't the organization then that it is now. When I came to know the professors here, at UC, who were in it all the time and always going on those trips--when I learned about the Sierra Club trips later--I realized that we should have been in it.

Rowell: My father was always too busy, I think. He would never have left his family to take a trip like that, even though he did, later, take a summer and go into Desolation Valley, behind Lake Tahoe.

I had never heard of people taking the kind of a trip we were taking. It was very adventurous to me, and very wonderful. Nobody on our trip had ever been on any of it before, so it was absolutely new to us. The boys who were leading us as guides had never been on any of it. All they had was a compass and a map. We very seldom could see the blazes on the side of the trees, because to see a blaze the snow had to have melted around from the tree enough and then you looked down and saw the blazes, which were about four or five feet, at least, up on these trees. We always looked down to see a blaze because of the terrific snow fall. There has not been anything like it until these last two years.

Riess: I don't see how you managed. You must have been walking in snow all the time.

Rowell: We were walking in snow all day long. Our shoes just got soaking, absolutely soaking.

As I say, the second night out we camped right in the midst of the snow. We were going on that next day and I can remember Eloise saying to Narde, "Oh, look at this blue snow!"

He said, "Blue snow!" He realized we were crossing right across the middle of Merced Lake. He got us off to the sides very, very quickly, and around that.

We evidently came in on Sunrise Trail, and finally came down to Tuolomne Meadows. He had thought that we could sleep in the Sierra Club lodge. It was just so tightly locked that there was no getting into it. So we laid our sleeping bags down and slept. In the morning everything was completely [frozen]. The Tuolomne River was frozen right over--solid ice. If we'd go down and knock it out and get water, it would ice by the time we brought it up.

Then we started up Lyell Canyon. Lyell Canyon was simply beautiful, with icicles hanging every place on either side of us. We got up to the foot of Mount Lyell, which would take us to Donohue Pass.

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Rowell: We decided that what to do was to have Narde and one of the sisters go up and see if they could make a trail that the animals could go on without falling all the time. So, they got up early in the

Rowell: morning and we could see them: They slid down on their fannies and their heels, making a zig-zag trail with their bodies that could really be a trail, without all these big chuck holes in it, so that the animals could follow up in the morning. The girl had her feet almost frozen. I remember her shoe strings sticking out straight when she got down, and we had to just work and work and work on her feet.

We were ready to start in the dark the next morning. We made it all right. There was only one thing. We got up to their point and they had forgotten to look down. It was straight down, just a cliff! We were quite a ways away from the pass. We found, in no time, that the animals couldn't make it through that snow anyway. As soon as the sun came up the animals would sink. So we had to carry all our stuff down and make a camp below. We had to leave our animals there on dry rocks and go on down several miles, which meant dragging all the luggage down through the snow. We lost much of it along the way. The boys had to come back in the middle of the night to get those animals down while the snow was hard.

From then on, it went nicely, except for an awfully interesting thing. One of the people had to teach at USC that summer. She had to get out and here we were, in the midst of nowhere. In the middle of the night I began thinking, "Oh, I have to play for the opening of the National Education Association at the Civic Auditorium in San Francisco, and I'll never get back for it." I'd entirely lost count of the days.

So Leonarde took us, with the little donkey, up over the mountain and down to bring back food. We had almost given out. He had a map to go by. That was all. He said, "There's supposed to be a hotel on the other side." We had not seen a human being and we had to take his word that there was a hotel there and some way of reaching civilization.

The two of us and that donkey climbed up and over the crest and came to a lake and started to try to take our animal across it but we saw the bridge was broken and so we had to come back. The donkey got frightened and raced right straight up to the top of the mountain that we'd come down so carefully. Narde left the two of us with just raisins in our pockets, and started after the donkey.

We sat there wondering what we were going to do. We didn't dare go on. After many hours we looked up and did see a horse on the skyline, and another and another, four horses up there. It turned out to be the ranger who'd been out for the very first time on that side of the Sierra, with two people.

Rowell: He came down to meet us and we asked about Leonarde. He said, "Oh, yes. I pursued and lassoed the animal for him. He will be coming on down with it." What luck!

We slept at the hotel that night. We were all unused to beds and put our sleeping bags on the floor for comfort. They had to send for a taxi to come the sixty miles and back, each way, to put us on a little narrow gauge train. We got into Mohave at two in the morning, transferred to something, and we got into San Francisco, and I don't know how I ever played. This was the Arion Trio. The music I had to play was illustrating Standard School Broadcast. We played the opening number. Some of those things I remember as being terribly difficult. How I ever thought I was going to play, after those weeks out in the wild with my hands in the snow all day long, I don't know. But I did. This is what I wonder about now. It is things like this that make me know now, what I would have denied then--that I was a "natural" with the cello.

I remember going right on to give the evening concert at the Key Route Inn and wondering whether I would be able to play there that night, and trying to tell the other two something about all the experiences, and it didn't seem to mean half as much to them as it did to me. I found out years afterwards that they really did appreciate it. I just was bubbling over with it.

Riess: In the scrapbook you had a nickname. What was your nickname?

Rowell: "Mig." That was long before the Germans took it. My husband never wanted anybody to call me "Mig." They could call me anything else, but not that. Even my brother found out. I'd never liked it. I'd always wished that I had been called Peggy, a natural nickname for Margaret. I asked people at school in the second grade to call me Peggy when we, Priscilla and I, were in the same grade together. She went around and told them to change the "e" to an "i." I stood being called "Piggy" for about two days and said, "No, you can call me Mig." So I was Mig for the rest of my life.

So there's a great division between before marriage and after marriage, because my husband objected to Mig. When I have the Mig friends I know they're from before marriage.

Ed Rowell's Background##

[Interview 6: October 18, 1982]

Rowell: Ed's parents came from Czechoslovakia and settled in Minnesota where Ed was born. He was brought up on a farm and he worked on that farm and knew how hard it was to farm. He helped his father plow and plant and of course lived through the harsh winters when the snow had to be cleared away every day. When he came to California he never wanted to see snow again.

When he was twelve he was in bed for a long time, with a serious foot injury, and while he recovered the minister brought books to him to read. Like so many illnesses are for so many people, that, I think, was a turning point for Ed.

He knew he wanted to go to college. That was not usual; sons usually stayed on to farm. He went to Dubuque, Iowa, to a college there. I think he would have become a minister, but for the fact that he then went on to the University of Chicago which at that time was considered the greatest university in the country, with amazing people there, amazing professors. He was older, of course, when he went there, than the other students--after all, he was then repeating college, and the teachers he had, later, at a fiftieth reunion in 1965, remember him as one of them. Anyway, after school there he went and taught at Carleton College for a year.

Then is when President Robert Gordon Sproul at Berkeley wrote to the University of Chicago asking for "a man trained in the philosophies who can teach my students to think." And it was quite a switch when he came here, but he did love Berkeley, of course.

When we were married and we had Galen, he was so pleased and so excited. Actually, when Galen was born, August 23, that was the start of the fall term, and he was so busy with school starting that he didn't come to the hospital and I didn't see him for those days. But everyone told me afterwards how excited he was.

In those first years we were both busy with Galen, so that Ed didn't have a chance to do much writing. He did write the Prolegomena To Argumentation, but that was to have been only the beginning. I wish now I could have taken the time to have him dictate more to me. His eyesight was so bad, yet he still read constantly, with the little sight he had in one eye. His writing was so fine, really wonderful. If he had written more and published more he would have gotten ahead in the university faster. As it was, it was not until late that he became a full professor.

A Royal Audience at Yosemite*

Riess: We wanted to add something today about the trio performing at Yosemite.

Rowell: The whole trio went in for a week or so in summer each year when I was going to college, and we just loved it, that was our vacation, they treated us royally. We put on our evening dresses, and they had a regular stage concert for us each evening.

Riess: This is at the Ahwahnee?

Rowell: No, not the Ahwahnee. In fact I don't know whether the Ahwahnee was even built in those days--yes it was, part of the time. But this was Camp Curry that always had the concerts, and it had been noted for it. In fact when I was in there in 1916 I was attracted to Camp Curry and its concerts because the violinist then had been a pupil of Leopold Auer, who taught Kreisler and all those people. And she played so beautifully, I just stood underneath that stage and listened to her and thought this was the most beautiful thing to hear really out of doors, never thinking I would ever be on that same stage myself playing years later.

Riess: How was it arranged?

Rowell: Curry's had a great big place where there were outdoor concerts in the evening, and then we stayed there for the firefall and played during the firefall. That always ended the program.

Riess: Did people get themselves dressed up a little bit, the audience?

Rowell: No, I don't think so, I don't remember. I just merely know that we played for a big audience every night.

One summer I wanted to stay longer, after I'd graduated, and we stayed almost the whole summer. That summer I remember so well because the Currys ran it, and Mary Curry was a very wonderful person who knew all the wildflowers and was very beautifully educated, and we saw her romance begin with one of the workers. He was going to Stanford at the time, and each summer we saw that romance develop until the last summer they were really very much in love, and she married him. Pretty soon he became the manager of the whole Curry Company and all of Yosemite Valley, and after that he just happened to become president of Stanford! That's [Donald B.] Tresidder. We saw all of that through our eyes; it was wonderful to see them.

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*[recorded August 12, 1983]

Rowell: It was one of those summers when we were there that they announced to us that the prince and princess of Sweden were going to arrive, and at that time there was a big, white hotel up on Glacier Point, the great big Glacier Point Hotel. The prince and princess were to stay there with their royal party.

So they closed the hotel completely to everybody else, but they told us that we were to play for them. Of course I, being the climber that I was in those days, insisted on going up the Ledge Trail--which since has been closed, now nobody is allowed to go up it--and sent my evening dress and cello up by car, and got up there.

We were so excited about playing for them. The table was set I would say for maybe twelve people, something like that. We waited for the prince and princess to come in, and the princess came in and I don't think I've ever been so disappointed in a princess in my whole life--my imagination of beauty and everything else, and here we were in our evening dresses. She came in in a gingham dress which was sort of pink-and-white, pinstriped, made just exactly as we would make them today. And he came in in hiking trousers, I would say. Their attendants were very casually dressed, also.

They sat down at the table, which was absolutely beautifully set, and there appeared the people in black, ready to serve them. When the prince got through with his soup, which was the first course, he jumped up and just motioned, held his soup bowl up in the air, "I want more, I want more!" He evidently thought he was in the "Wild West," you see, which was wonderful. So that was our introduction to them.

The other thing that was interesting was that there was a huge half of an avocado with a piece of lemon at each place. Avocadoes in those days were something so rare. The princess didn't touch hers, so nobody at that table touched theirs. Of course they were wonderful to us. The prince would run over to us at the piano and tell us what he wanted us to play, very informal, very wonderful.

When they left, there were those twelve halves of huge avocadoes, and the waitress said, "What can we do? What can we do?" All they had to tell me was that I could have all I wanted. I think it's been at least forty years that I haven't cared two hoots about avocadoes! I ate my fill! [laughter]

It was the next day that was so exciting. The crown prince, we knew, wanted to ride down into the valley on horseback to find out all about the wildflowers and the rocks and so on. So it was Tresidder who was destined to take him down the sixteen-mile trail, which they did, and they evidently had a wonderful time together.

Rowell: That night we had to give a program at Camp Curry for them. We knew that his father had written a national hymn that everybody knew in Sweden. They'd given it to us to arrange for the trio, so we announced it and played it, and he was of course sitting down in the front row, and he immediately jumped right straight up on his chair and said, "My father did not write that. That was my great-great-grandfather who wrote it." [laughter] But it really was Gustaf Adolf, the same name.

I might just say that they have both died since then. When the princess, then of course, Queen of Sweden, died and I saw her picture in the paper, I was attracted to the picture immediately; that long, long, almost homely face had not changed, but there was a beauty in it as she grew older. It was a homely and long, broad-boned, Swedish face.

When he died I had already learned that what he did was to take either one or two months off every year from being king--now many people know this--to go incognito on archaeological digs, and he did that all his life. Did you know that? I think that's just fascinating. I must say that I had the greatest respect for the Swedish royal family from then on. I think they were simply remarkable. They were completely natural in every way, and they maybe overdid it a shade for that particular occasion, but I don't think so; I think it was we who didn't know how to meet them.

Riess: Was Tresidder well up in the company when he took them on the tour of the valley?

Rowell: No, I don't think so. But he was going with Mary Curry very definitely, and the Currys arranged everything, and I believe he was going to Stanford, and I believe he was majoring in medicine. But he knew his wildflowers and rocks and he knew everything about the mountains, as Mary did too.

Riess: Would you say that that characterized most of the people who went to Yosemite then? That they were really well informed?

Rowell: Well, remember that the Currys lived there all summer long every summer. You almost become part of the very landscape.

Riess: I mean the people who came to visit Yosemite for the summer, compared to who you might imagine goes and plops themselves down there now. Do you think that it was different?

Rowell: No, I don't think there was that much difference. Actually there were fewer people on the trail then than now. When we started off in those days and went on trails, we were alone. Hiking was

Rowell: not "in." Today they're crowded. And the people stayed underneath and played cards and did all sorts of things, which disgusted me in those days! So I wouldn't say it had changed so much.

Almost every morning, because I had to play every night, I would get up sometimes at four or four-thirty in the morning and start out when it was just getting light and take a long trail and be back by lunchtime and take a good swim and be ready to play in the evening. But I would hike ten or twelve miles in the morning. I remember I did Half Dome. It was the first time it had been opened for years with the cables.

Riess: Who arranged that the trio be in Yosemite?

Rowell: I can't tell you that. I had visited there so many, many times and I'd seen and heard the music, and we knew Mary Curry's best friend--who was a very beautiful vocalist who was a soloist on NBC in San Francisco--and it was probably through her that they came for us. So I don't know. I don't remember such details.

Riess: When you were hiking on those trails did you ever think of yourself as somebody who should watch out for her hands and arms and things like that?

Rowell: No, not at all, not at all, not in the least.

Riess: That's interesting, isn't it? Don't you think that concert cellists or violinists would be very averse to using themselves physically if they were--

Rowell: Well, rock climbing was not in as it is today. I did very little. Of course I pulled myself up some places I guess and did that, but the actual rock climbing as it's known today, as my son does, just simply wasn't in in those days. People didn't do it. That came from I guess almost Switzerland later.

Riess: So you weren't clawing your way along, as it were, in any way?

Rowell: Well, of course I had done that very much in 1926 when we first climbed Mt. Whitney. There were no trails up at all, and I was conferring with somebody the other day who did it just about three years after I did, and she said, "Oh yes, we went up that chimney too." Then we really did have to fight our way up the chimney. We were climbing with our hands and legs the whole way up, just as they do a present-day chimney, as they call them. So on <u>that</u> trip I did use everything I had, and of course on that trip I went right back to Yosemite to play.

Rowell: The minute I got through--and I'd been three weeks climbing Mt. Whitney and of course absolutely in the wilds--I had to take a train, and my father put my cello in its soft case on a Pullman overnight from Oakland to Fresno, where I met the train, and then took a little, tiny narrow-gauge train into Yosemite, and then the bus into Yosemite, and had to play that night. The trio was waiting for me, and I had to put on an evening dress and walk out there, not having had a chance to really practice, and I'd been three weeks doing all this climbing and clambering.

I got out there, and the funniest thing was not playing my cello but it was sitting down in a chair! It felt so funny to sit down in a chair, and the other thing that was funny was looking at my music; those two things were funny. But of course playing didn't seem hard to me at all. I can't see now how I could think I could sit down and play without having really practiced. But it evidently came very naturally to me, and there it was, so I just played. [laughter]

Riess: You must have really tried the patience of the rest of the trio at moments like that.

Rowell: Oh, I'm sure I did, but they never mentioned it, never, never, never. Really I often think about going in and just putting on my dress and walking up on that stage. Of course I was--what should I say?--never at ease on the stage, I never am, I'm always nervous.

Riess: So it wouldn't have made any difference to have had a day to prepare?

Rowell: Oh, it would have, I'm sure it would have been better, sure it would have been better, but they put up with me through thick and thin.

The Berkeley Unitarian Fellowship

Rowell: Ed and I became very interested in the Unitarian Church. It was the First Unitarian Church in that wonderful Maybeck building down on the corner of Bancroft and Dana. Lovely music and excellent ministers. Raymond Cope was the minister for a long time. Ed always filled the pulpit once or twice a year there. When I say "filled the pulpit," I don't mean preached a sermon, but he always gave a remarkable talk which fitted in with their background very well.

Riess: That's the tradition in the Unitarian Church, that the minister is from the congregation?

Rowell: No, it isn't. Most Unitarian churches have a regular minister just like anybody else.

Later on a group of couples broke away from the First Unitarian Church to form the Berkeley Fellowship of Unitarians. I did not pay attention to reasons. I was and still am very fond of Raymond Cope, who was the minister at that time. As far as I can understand there was disagreement about the running of the Sunday School. They differed on how the children should be taught in Sunday School. It was not a really negative attitude, because we all ran back to the First Church for many of their occasions.

And at that time it did come to having those professors take over the Sunday morning services. They were absolutely fascinating. I have never enjoyed such a circle of people. The attendance was absolutely regular. Nobody would miss it for anything.

Riess: Did it grow in size, or did it always remain that circle?

Rowell: It grew in size. Yes. Those few that were there, that did the actual--I don't like to call it a breaking away, because we often went back to the old church for all sorts of things, but this was its own group. I could tell you some of the people who belonged to it.

Riess: Yes.

Rowell: Put that down for just a minute. [break in tape] Augusta Trumpler was one. I was with her last Sunday--just as active and brilliant as ever. Her husband was a professor of astronomy and in charge of the Mount Hamilton observatory. They lived down there for many, many years. I don't believe it was until his retirement that they moved up here to Berkeley. But somehow we knew them before that because we visited them at Mount Hamilton. It was their son-in-law, Harold Weaver, who was in charge of Mount Hamilton when we took Galen down. We went down several times. One time we slept on their front porch in our sleeping bags. Another time we camped out below Mount Hamilton and enjoyed it. Going in there and looking through the telescope and everything was wonderful.

Harold Weaver married Augusta's daughter, Cecile. They now live in Berkeley. Harold would give a sermon--maybe twenty years or longer ago than that--and tell us that there was life on other planets, other places in the universe. There would have to be some

Rowell: place, if we only could find it. I thought this, coming from a person who's in charge of that whole observatory and has devoted his life to astronomy, really very exciting. He is still with our group, still telling us!

Riess: The sermons would be on anything of general interest?

Rowell: Yes. There was a wonderful quality to them. I would say that they were a spiritual experience, rather than the usual religious experience, except to me that one was.

Riess: Did you ever give one?

Rowell: No. I should say not.

Riess: Is that a list of the members?

Rowell: Yes. You can see how there are plenty of them. It came to be a very close association, so that we would get together often.

I was trying to think of Professor Marvin Rosenberg, of dramatics. His wife wrote beautiful poetry, very religious poetry, inspired poetry. She died of cancer. It was a terrific experience for all of us in that small group, to have her right in her bloom of living have to go. We tried to do everything for him. He went over and spent a summer in England with the theater--this was probably a year or so afterwards--and came back with a perfectly beautiful young bride, who is still a part of our group. I see them at least once a month now and they are very, very happy.

Professor Willard V. Rosenquist and Anna Lou Rosenquist in the design department. He does such perfectly beautiful art work. What he did for the Fellowship, the hanging mosaics and all those enameled things were beautifully done.

His wife, Anna Lou Rosenquist, is perhaps one of my dearest friends. She, as I see it, is practically responsible for the Gray Panthers at Berkeley. I notice they have her address to send to. She has been very, very ill in her life, but you would never know it. I think she must weigh eighty pounds. But she's right there all the time. They make trips to Europe, back and forth.

Riess: In the Fellowship a sermon could be devoted to the whole issue of the Gray Panthers?

Rowell: Oh yes. Often somebody would write a play with a certain background to it. That would be a very definite thing. They can put on a Greek thing, put on all sorts of things. But basically, I loved the discussions. I would say that there were some very, very beautiful sermons by wonderful outsiders.

Rowell: I might call Anna Lou Rosenquist, who would know the whole thing, and find out some of those names. [See Appendices.]

Riess: It would be interesting if we could include some of the names in this.

Rowell: Yes. I remember one time--I didn't know the name at all--they said that Joan Baez was coming to service one morning. I didn't know why, suddenly, there was a whole crowd of young people sitting on the floor and all around when I arrived. Then came Joan Baez and she spoke very beautifully. If you've ever heard her speak you know she does speak beautifully. And she sang. Her songs were the religious songs. She herself was a very religious person.

Riess: Were young people included?

Rowell: It was both. It went the gamut, but I would say these college professors and their wives were the backbone of it.

The wonderful part of it, to me, is that what happened then has gone right on. There was a long time when I didn't know about anything going on. Of course, I was very, very busy. The group has been turned over, more and more, to the young people. Now it's entirely, almost, a young peoples' meeting. So I don't go any more because it's too young for me, and too young for most of us.

But what has happened is that these people of forty or thirty years ago, whenever all this was, get together once a month at somebody's home. It's really just remarkable. One person there takes over the whole thing.

One of the people who I enjoy very much is Dr. Sedgwick Mead. He and his wife were the backbones of it. She was always helping in every hospital--Kaiser Hospital and so on--helping the patients in every way that she possibly could. Dr. Sedgwick Mead was in charge of the Vallejo rehabilitation center for years and years. I don't see how he could have the smile that he has and that absolute feel for humanity that he has. A devoted person. I went up and visited one whole day. Did I tell you this?

I have never been so impressed by any hospital as I was by that hospital. The people running around in wheelchairs, maybe without any legs or arms but with a smile on their face and doing everything under the sun. It wasn't a place where people lay down and were in bed. I was so excited by it. I can't possibly tell you now.

Riess: Were you in Vallejo because you were interested in something like music therapy?

Rowell: I'm very interested in music therapy. It always was one of my main interests and I've always followed it.

No. I actually was there to see Dr. Mead because he was a friend of my husband's. My husband, at that time, was in a convalescent hospital. But when I saw how that hospital was run I wondered if there was any possibly that Ed could be there and regain something.

Sedgwick Mead came right down to Ed's convalescent hospital in East Oakland and spent time with Ed, for whom he had such respect. He came out and said, "Margaret, I can't do a thing. It is senility." That was it. That was a horrible moment for me, but he was simply wonderful to me.

Riess: So the nucleus of this original group, now meets once a month?

Rowell: Yes. What I'm sure would be called the old people, almost entirely the professors and their wives. And nobody wants to miss it. It's always a good crowd. There's always the same bunch of us that get together.

Sedgwick Mead wrote the most exciting thing for one of his that I ever heard. He spent a great deal of time on it. I can't explain it to you. He ran a tape, and that tape was one of the most revealing tapes I've ever had. I won't even try to attempt to tell you what it was. He didn't want to explain until he'd done it all.

It started with--well, you didn't know what it was. You heard a swishing of water in the background. What it really came out to be was the whole thing of the unborn child inside the womb. It was just fascinating, all that went on for the reactions--the inner and the outer and the outer and the inner. He, being a doctor, knew what he was talking about. It was fascinating.

Riess: That's interesting. It is a very non-establishment religion that you finally ended up with. And yet religion itself is important to you.

Rowell: Very important. Very important. And I think it is to most of the people in the group. It looks at all sides. I like the expansiveness of it.

Ed, Margaret, and Galen

Rowell: Let's see if there's more to tell about Ed. I'm sure there is a great deal more.

Riess: Yes. You said, when you were talking about taking a class from him, that it wasn't exactly speech that he was teaching.

Rowell: [laughter] Well, I don't know whether I said that. I think that what he did want to do was to get you to think through what you were going to do. His idea was outlining very carefully, getting things in order. He was a great order person. He was a very quiet person and he never spoke until he knew exactly what he was going to say, and said it in really beautiful words.

Riess: Did that make him sort of compulsive, rigid?

Rowell: Not in any way rigid. He was the easiest man to live with and the quietest man to live with. Now, I don't speak in good sentences. Everybody has always called me down for running ahead and never putting a period, and then stopping, and doing all sorts of things. None of this ever bothered Ed in the least, and I was always surprised.

I had one friend, an elderly person who had come from Germany, who spoke without stopping ever. Just talk, talk, talk. She drove me wild. Her daughter was one of my very dear friends. I hated to have her come out and talk to Ed because of his very quiet and fine way of speaking. But he was simply entranced with her, and treated her like a queen.

He loved people of all backgrounds. The fact that I never finished my sentences--he's one of the few people who never called me down for it.

Riess: How about with Galen? Did he have very high expectations of how Galen should speak and write?

Rowell: You know, that never occurred to me until this moment. Galen stuttered so badly all through his youth, and I never thought of it connected with his father's magnificent speech until this very moment. It never had occurred to me. But Galen did stutter all through grammar school and quite a bit of high school.

I remember in high school Galen's first big appearance was with his rocks, which I should tell about.

Riess: You told me about when he was on television, talking about his rocks, and he didn't stutter a bit.

Rowell: Yes.

Ed had--I think we both had--this feeling of the unfolding of a person. Neither of us told him what to do or what we expected of him, really. I think in that we agreed. I don't think he taught Galen how to talk or speak, or anything.

Riess: Did he have a program for Galen's life? Here is his son. What he wanted him to be or do?

Rowell: Not in the least. Never mentioned it.

Riess: You've mentioned several times how you wish you could have supported Ed's career more, given more time to that.

Rowell: Yes.

Riess: In fact, did the two of you really consciously work out how your time was to be spent? Or did you just sandwich it in?

Rowell: We just lived our lives. I don't think we ever once thought that the other one was getting in our way. I don't think we ever had that feeling. I don't think he ever had it with me. I'm pretty sure that he didn't, because we had such a good time together.

Of course, our great times together were, I will have to say, in the out-of-doors, for both of us. I only wish that we could have had more of it. Ed, evidently, just loved to travel. He had taken [his daughter] Anne, now Mrs. Peter Moorhead, on a trip to the desert, to the Indian country. He was always going across the United States, driving, and doing all sorts of things. He had that wonderful feeling in him, too.

Riess: Did he take Galen on trips by himself?

Rowell: No, he never did. But that, again, would have been his eyes. That never happened because we always did everything together, the three of us. We didn't do things separately. Except as I did my music, and as he would go down to his meetings.

He was on the Starr King School of Ministry board all the time. He and Aurelia Henry Reinhardt, president of Mills College. I would always get him down early to those meetings because he enjoyed talking to her so much beforehand.

Riess: When he had sabbaticals, where did you go?

Rowell: [chuckles] Oh. Now you're talking. I always kidded him by telling him that I married him because I knew professors had sabbaticals. We never had a sabbatical because every sabbatical was taken up with eye operations. In all the years that we were married, he never had a day off from the campus, except as we would take an afternoon off to go some place.

Riess: Were you teaching at home after you got married?

Rowell: Yes. Up 'til, I think it was 1958 or so. Mills College put me on their faculty and I went out to Mills, I think only one day a week, and taught out there. From Mills, very soon, I went to San Francisco State. Then I was gone two days a week. That gave him a great deal of time to write. I always felt that.

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Riess: Did he enjoy listening to a music lesson?

Rowell: I don't think it disturbed him. I don't think he heard it. He had his library and his whole office upstairs.

Of course, I didn't do as much teaching then as I do now, by any manner of means. I did very little teaching my first few years of marriage, almost none at all. It very gradually grew. I don't know how it grew.

Riess: Well, you had some time when Galen started going to school and all of that.

Rowell: Yes, but even then I didn't teach that much. I loved my section meetings--my peace section and my this section--of the faculty wives. I loved doing things. I always met Ed--I think I mentioned that--one afternoon a week, right at noon, and we always went some place different every single week. We never made plans. Sometimes to San Francisco, sometimes to a museum, sometimes to a park, sometimes one place or the other. We always had that afternoon that was absolutely sacred to us.

The Faculty Wives Peace Section, and the Peace Movement, World War II

Riess: What period were you involved in the peace section?

Rowell: That was the first section I joined when I was married. It had people like Professor Adams's wife, in English. She was really something. And, of course, Mrs. Winifred Rogin and Mrs. Tolman

Rowell: were two of my very dearest friends in that. I wish I could think of all the others. I was very impressed with them. Mrs. Kroeber was also in that.

All my background had been toward that, all my life and all my reading. We in the trio, as I've said, were always reading books on everything of that type. It was just a natural for me to go into that particular section. I had no idea what a group I was getting in with, but they really were a wonderful group.

Riess: This would have been before America entered World War II. Were you women absolutely against America's entering the war?

Rowell: Well, it was quite a bit before that, it would have been 1937, that I really first belonged.

I would say we were against war as war, very definitely, and very much against our going into it.

Riess: What did that particular section do? I mean, I know that the interest was peace, but what was the activity?

Rowell: My sakes. Now that you ask me, I can't remember what we did that was really constructive.

Riess: Did you bring speakers to the campus, or that sort of thing, do you think?

Rowell: We worked with organizations. We worked through organizations. I gave so much work and time, from the very beginning, to the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom--Jane Addams. Every one of those women belonged to that. So, I think I thought that my WILPF was really the thing that was constructive. I still belong to it.

I think that the peace section was more or less an offshoot of that, rather than the other way around. The peace section maybe met once a month, something like that. I can't tell you what they did in comparison to what WILPF did, which was to get in and work from the ground floor up.

I was totally unprepared for the Second World War when it came.

Riess: Casals, in something I was reading, made some remark that led me to conclude that cellists and the peace movement are closely linked.

Rowell: You're absolutely right there. It's really been right straight through as far as I can possibly see. Casals perhaps in some way stood for it. And here is Bonnie Hampton, who gives her services

Rowell: all the time for everything for peace. She gave a concert, long before our particular troubles now, in Casals's name.

Riess: People who have lived through the world wars, a couple of people I have talked to, think that women, mothers, could stop war if they really used their power and influence in that way.

Rowell: I think you're right on a very important point. One of the greatest disappointments of my whole life has been--. I saw women's suffrage come in. My oldest sister, Louise, worked for Mrs. Charles D. [Isabella] Blaney, who was in charge for California. My sister was going to Stanford, but her summers were spent with this woman, being her secretary. This was before California had voted for women's suffrage, the summers of 1911, 1912, 1913 and 1914.

We were so interested in the suffrage. Of course, my background--I'm the only one in the family who hasn't got a Susan B. Anthony spoon. She sent all the other children a spoon when they were born, with her picture on it, and engraved with their names. I didn't get a name until I was a year old, so she couldn't put my name on a spoon. But I have all these four volumes of the history, that she wrote, and she was always in touch with my father.

Riess: "Your grandmother, Sarah Anthony Burtis, and my father's second cousin--" [reading dedication]. That is the connection?

Rowell: It says here, "As the appointed secretaries could not be heard, Sarah Anthony Burtis, an experienced Quaker school teacher whose voice had been well trained in her profession, filled the duties of that office, and she read the report and the documents of the convention with a clear voice and a confident manner, to the great satisfaction of her more timid co-adjusters." So, anyway, there we have that. She became Susan B. Anthony's official secretary, I believe, for the rest of her life.

Susan B. Anthony wrote a different dedication to my father in every volume, and there are four volumes of this.

Riess: This book is called The History of Women's Suffrage, by Susan B. Anthony. Her dedication in it is to Mr. Lewis B. Avery, "In memory of his beautiful mother, Elizabeth Burtis Avery." It is written by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony and Mathilda Joslyn Gage.

Rowell: Yes, but it's all Susan B. Anthony.

Mr Lewis Burtis Avery

Principal - Benson High School

Redlands - California -

In memory of his beautiful sister

Elizabeth Burtis - Avery -

Susan B. Anthony

17. Madison street

Rochester - N.Y.

Nov. 7. 1905 -

Rowell: [reading another] "To Lewis B. Avery, with the hope that all of his students may become thoroughly acquainted with the great principles that underlie the demand for the full enfranchisement of women. Very sincerely yours, Susan B. Anthony. Rochester, New York. November 7, 1905." There is that.

Let me see what this dedication says. [reading] "This volume closes the words of the nineteenth century and gives the status of women in this and foreign countries to the year of 1900. Your sincere friend and co-worker, Susan B. Anthony. November 7, 1905."

So, I was brought up with it, and I've never been as disappointed with anything as I have with what women have done with their franchise. It's practically broken my heart. When I listen in over the air now, when I'm traveling, to talk sessions, and hear the women take the stand they do, both as to our government and the whole thing of peace, I'm just shocked. I cannot see how any woman, bearing a child and rearing a child, can think that war is a way out. It's impossible for me to see the human mind that can in any way absorb that and feel that that is a way of going. It's an inhuman thing to me.

Riess: At the time that you were working on suffrage, you didn't have an inkling that--?

Rowell: Well, I never worked on suffrage. I would have been eighteen years old, but there was no vote for us until twenty-one, at that time. I was interested in it.

I would not have thought of what?

Riess: That at least half of the female population was just as benighted as 90 percent of the male population?

Rowell: Yes. Oh no. I really have been very, very disappointed--completely--with what women have done, not only with their voting, but with their time. I mean, they felt that they had to compete with men all the time. This I don't believe in at all. I don't know what the answer is. Of course, we're still in the midst of it. We're still riding it. As you can see, I believe in the equality.

Thank goodness I never thought of anything else while I was brought up. My poor father, with four girls and one boy! But we were never brought up with any, as you can see, sense of inequality between the sexes, whatsoever.

Riess: Was this peace issue something that the Unitarian group worked on actively?

Rowell: Yes, of course. I couldn't imagine them taking any other stand except 100 percent that way. I think we had many, many Quakers in our Unitarian group. I think the Quakers have a wonderful stand, myself. I'm very proud of all that they've done.

Maybe we should say a little bit more about war, because to me that's the greatest subject in the whole world today. It's one that we forget--I forget--all the time as I'm going around this house and as I'm doing things and as I'm teaching. I completely forget that it is possible in this world to have war. And yet, here I am and it's going right on.

I'm afraid I don't know how to reconcile it. I just don't. Every day I live I wonder what is going to happen, and I'm not doing enough about it. I'm really not. With all my background I'm not just getting out. One of my very dear friends, Madeline Duckles, devotes a good part of every day to everything that she can do to keep war away. I admire her so much for that. She's over in Russia right now. If she finds that there's something happening in Finland, where she should be, she'll use her own money and go there. I don't know whether she's been to India. Yes. She'll go where she thinks they really need her. She's a beautiful speaker, thank goodness, so that she can speak very quietly, very effectively.

I have so many friends that are that way that I feel as if I'm doing so little for it.

Riess: But they all would say to you that what you are doing is just right.

Rowell: Well, I will have to say that when we gave that great big concert [to raise funds for the Nuclear Freeze Initiative, November 1982 ballot] in San Francisco, in Davies Hall, and had to recruit people for it, it was the easiest thing to ask musicians to give their services for that. You could not imagine a musician refusing or having another idea.

However, there are a couple of musicians who did refuse, and I do have to respect them. One, and I don't think he would mind my saying, was Janos Starker. I was rather struck and thought, "Oh, this is terrible. This is just absolutely awful," because I'm so used to everybody [agreeing]. But I realized that as Hungarians they've seen the Russians come in and do everything to them, so I see that from their own experience they are afraid, they're full of fear now.

Rowell: I haven't that sense of fear in me, because I haven't experienced it personally. I don't know what I would be like had I actually experienced it personally as they have. I can't blame them for their action. But I have to go on with my action which says, if they kill me, okay, but this is the way I believe: that we should not go out and kill other people. I don't care what happens to me. So, that's it.

I think that musicians, as a whole, tend this way. I find out in my own students, teaching them, that I haven't any students who don't believe in peace. I simply don't. I think that the arts, basically, emphasize the creativeness of a person. I was with people yesterday where their families back of them had been creative. One of them, their family had been going over the world as street musicians in different countries. The other one, their family traveled always and were doing all sorts of creative things. They gave up teaching school to write books, and so on. I find that this creative approach belongs to a person whose mind doesn't see killing off other people. I don't care whether it's with spears, as in the old days, or whether it's with bombs of today. They don't see that killing off of other people as a way of solving anything.

Friendships

Riess: I'd like to talk about your friends at the university. We've mentioned a few by talking about the Unitarian Fellowship, and the fact that you were a member of this faculty wives section club.

Rowell: Well, I would say that I have a very, very close friendship with just a few people from the university background. It just so happens that our husbands are all professors. It's not <u>because</u> they are professors that we're friends, at all. So I don't put it down in the category of belonging to a section or belonging to anything else. It's only because we like each other so much and love to get together.

One of my very, very closest friends I saw Saturday night for the first time in seven months. That's Christine Sanford, whose husband, Nevitt Sanford, was at the university for many years, and was one of those three or four professors who refused to sign the loyalty oath on that last day. Professor Tolman was another one.

Rowell: At that time, the Sanfords only had seven children, and lived on a farm just off of Tunnel Road, with cows, horses, chickens and everything else under the sun. You can imagine the life of that family, and he was going out that morning--the last morning of the loyalty oath--and Christine said to him, "If you sign the loyalty oath, just don't bother to come home." [laughter] I've never forgotten that.

Riess: Wonderful support.

Rowell: You would have thought it would have been the other way around, with her responsibilities, but no. The aftermath of that, as far as he was concerned, because that was a terrific action to take, was that the next morning he first got a call from Harvard saying, "Will you come here?" Then he got a call from London saying, "Will you come here?" And so on. It showed, instantly, the universality of the thought of the great people of the world in a moment like that, instead of the triviality of taking a stand here. Christine has always been one of my very dearest friends.

Kay Caldwell, wife of Professor Caldwell, in English, is another. And Winifred Rogin is one of my very closest friends. Ed took me to meet her before we were married and introduced me to her when we were still engaged. She had her three very small children around her at that time, and I will never forget the beauty of her face, and the beauty of those children. I still consider her one of my very dearest friends.

Another one of my friends, who is no longer here, was Juna Danielson, who was not at the university but had more influence on all of us than anybody else. She kept us informed on how we should vote on everything. Not only did we all believe the same, but she had read everything on it and could inform us all of everything every week. So we just loved her.

So, let's see. It was Christine Sanford, Juna Danielson, Kay Caldwell, Winifred Rogin, Peggy Hayes--my sakes, I can't leave these other people out. I mean, we got together almost every week and ate together. That was what was so wonderful.

Riess: That's what I wondered, how you kept up that kind of relationship.

Rowell: Well, we had a group we could get together on a moment's notice. At that time we'd call ourselves "the gang." The person at whose home we met would have the main dish--one would bring vegetables, the other would bring dessert, and one would bring the salad--and we'd just sit around the table.

Rowell: We do more or less the same thing right now, with a group that includes Mary Jones, widow of Professor Harold Jones, head of child study, and Elizabeth Elkus, widow of Professor Albert Elkus, head of the University of California Music Department, president of the San Francisco Conservatory, Kay Caldwell, Christine Sanford and Peggy Hayes, sister of Alexander Calder, inventor of the mobile. So, that group gets together quite often.

Christine and Winifred and myself always had a Wednesday noon lunch together, no matter what happened. Rain, shine, we couldn't do anything for that except to have our lunch together on Wednesday noons. There was never any question of career or not career. We just simply sat down and talked about the world. I never think of myself as being a career person anyway. I really don't. I would go there and settle right down into it. This is what I loved.

Riess: Did you have any theories of child rearing? Did you and Ed discuss it?

Rowell: No, no. Not at all. Somehow, Ed was not the person with whom you sat down and discussed things. We both just sort of took things as they came.

I realize now I knew so little about childbirth. I knew absolutely nothing. I'd never been around, didn't have any idea what it was going to be like, never had any preparation for it whatsoever. Nobody ever told you what it was going to be like. Nobody ever told me what you had to do. I had no prenatal training of any kind whatsoever.

Galen Rowell, Growing Up##

Rowell: Ed was fifty-four when Galen was born [1940]. I've told you how excited he was. However, he had the feelings, which I think was due to that time particularly, that the man didn't step in and do the physical work of dishes or housework. He was just wonderful with Galen, but of course he didn't get up with him, the way I hear that fathers do these days, and then feed them and do that type of thing. But he really had in him that great love for Galen.

As soon as Galen was able to be up and about, I guess this was when he was a year old or so, he made him a little kind of baby buggy in which to wheel him up and down the street. It was just loads of fun. The neighbors loved to see Ed wheeling Galen in it.

Rowell: Those were the days when you fed a child absolutely every four hours. If they bawled their heads off in between, you didn't pay any attention to them. You weren't allowed to. That was good for their lungs. I don't believe in it at all.

Riess: But Ed did believe in it?

Rowell: Yes.

Riess: So, who won?

Rowell: Oh, Ed, of course. I wouldn't say that. I didn't know any better then than to think that you had to do what was supposed to be done, which was that you fed them every four hours.

Riess: But it went against your instincts.

Rowell: Yes.

Riess: With your group of women friends, then, would that have been trivial, as far as you were concerned, to talk about baby feeding schedules?

Rowell: Every mother did it. The doctors told us to.

I very much confined myself to home when Galen was young, very much, and to teaching. I don't remember any group meeting that soon. That would be forty years ago. I did decide, if I could possibly breast feed him, to do that. I had no idea it would make such a commotion as it did. Did I show you the thing that appeared in the paper about it or not?* No?

Riess: I don't think so.

Rowell: The article never named me, but it said that a professor's wife was breast feeding her own baby and that the boy would probably grow up with strong teeth and a strong jaw, and this type of thing. It was very unusual.

Riess: Was that the theory, that if they were breast fed they would have strong jaws and teeth?

Rowell: Well, I think it is, more or less. I've always heard that. Anyway, this person wrote it up. He wouldn't have told my name for anything, because you never saw a breast fed child in those days.

Of course, I had had tuberculosis, so I had to beg my doctor. He said, "Oh, sure. It'll be perfectly okay." So, I did it. I loved it. And I think Ed was very proud of me.

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*"A young mother I know, a college professor's wife, is proud as can be of nursing her own baby. And is her scholarly husband proud of his wife! You would hardly think a comparatively commonplace biological achievement like a mother's giving nourishment to her offspring in the way nature provided could give two exceptionally favored and intelligent persons so much undisguised delight.

Rowell: Galen was a rambunctious youngster from the very beginning. He wasn't the cuddly kind of a baby that I'd always expected. You would hold him and--I've seen other babies like it since--he would just throw himself right backwards, right when you were holding him. He would almost jump out of your arms backwards before he could creep or walk. Ed always insisted that he be put to bed just by the clock, and Galen had entirely different ideas, even after he was able to be up and around. I can remember trying to have guests for dinner--in fact, I remember having a very wonderful writer, Harry Overstreet and his wife Bonaro--and Galen being put to bed. But no, no. He would always climb up clear over his crib--all the outside things--and be under the piano before you'd know it. They were amazed.

Ed did start reading to him when he was very, very young. I think that was one of the most wonderful things of Galen's life. I think it made a great deal of difference to him, and I think he remembers quite a bit of what Ed read to him. Galen, being my only child, and I not having been around young children because I was the youngest in my own family, I didn't realize how children develop. I didn't think anything of it when Galen started reading at a very young age, and would read through a book and know it by heart. He didn't have to be taught. I remember being in the doctor's office and turning the pages, and he would read every single page.

He had this great desire always to collect things. When he was about five it was matchbook covers: he had hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of them. The wall in his bedroom had little tiny wires of them across with hundreds of them on each. That whole wall just covered solid with matchbooks. He couldn't get enough. He would drive me wild when we'd be on the street and he would run to the gutter to get them out of the gutter. I objected to that.

Once when we were in Carmel he saw one over a fence and, of course, climbed the fence instantly and got it, and got himself caught right on the barbed wire. It didn't bleed seriously, which would have been good for it, so they told me that I just had to get him right away to get a tetanus shot. I brought him back to Kaiser as soon as I could.

I spent that day down at the hospital with him. I remember it so well. The only thing, since we were caught down there--well, I may have taken one book along, but not enough--was to do arithmetic with him. I was amazed at what happened. He just adored it. I would go through the ones, and the twos. When I got to thirteens--he was sitting beside me--he could give me the answer almost instantly, what thirteen thirteens were and so on.

"But as the husband proudly informed me, this marvelous feat of his wife's is rare in university circles. Faculty members' progeny are usually bottle babies and it is felt among the friends of this self-sufficient young mother that she is doing something which sheds honor on her alma mater.

"At any rate she's giving her tiny son the right start in life. His jaws are getting the exercise nature intended them to have. May his whole career be equally well grounded." A.E. Anderson, Oakland Post-Enquirer, December 19, 1940.

Rowell: I couldn't believe it! I found out that he simply had that type of a mathematical mind. I mean, he just adds a thing of figures, up to this day, in no time at all. His daughter Nicole was just marveling at it. I can't do it at all. It takes me forever.

Riess: How much music did you present to him as a child?

Rowell: Well, he heard enough music most certainly. I tried to give a concert when he was about two years old. It was very hard preparing for it. I never tried for one after that. I found out then--I didn't realize it but I really think that he was jealous of my music, of what it did to take me away, because I've seen it in other children since then, with their parents. One time he practically grabbed my bow away from me. Then I was very aware of it.

He was always making up his own melodies, with his own words to them. He would ask me to write them down. He must have taken some lessons before that and was in a few little recitals. He'd say, "Mother, I have a song," and I would write it down as he would do it.

Then he began writing his own. He would draw five lines in one clef, then he would make up the five lines for another clef and put his C wherever he wanted it. In other words, not a bass clef. He would make up his own clef signs and he'd read both clefs on the piano at one time, perfectly easily. He'd say, "Oh, this is in 'bumpy' clef." He'd have different names for different clefs. So, he did have a good musical mind.

I started him with piano. He came and said, "I'd like to take piano lessons." He did very well and seemed to like it very much. Then he came back after a couple of years and said, "I'd like not to take piano lessons." I, like a very foolish parent, said, "Okay." That was my upbringing, to let the child decide. But I've always regretted that I did do that, because he would have made a very good pianist.

The real thing came when he got to playing a little Schubert melody from the Unfinished Symphony. It was just a simple melody with its harmony, but done very beautifully. Once when we had company I think we had our radio on and the symphony was doing this. He went to the piano and played the same melody, beautifully. He knew it.

The guests complimented him on it. "Oh, this is great. He can play what he's just heard!" But he knew how hard he had practiced that piece. He ran into his bedroom and just wept and wept, because they had thought he could play anything he'd heard. I never could get him to play it again. Isn't that interesting?

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"Adventure Is Life Itself"

Galen Rowell's wilderness is never anything but a savage joy.

WHO WOULDN'T want to trade places with Galen Rowell? Traveling about four months each year, he has made ten mountain-climbing trips to Alaska and ten expeditions to the high peaks of Asia in Nepal, India, Pakistan, China, and Tibet, as well as Canada, Africa, and the United States, particularly in the Sierra. "I am not a professional mountaineer," he says, "because I don't get paid to climb." He makes his living as a free-lance writer-photographer, producing books, magazine articles, and photographs for various purposes, including posters and calendars. Nearly a hundred of his photographs will be on exhibit at the California Academy of Sciences beginning November 5.

Rowell, born in Berkeley, quit his ten-year-old automotive business on San Pablo Avenue when he started being paid well by magazines for his writing and photography. "By 1971, I knew I'd have to make a decision, so I sold my garage. Fortunately, things worked out well. I don't look back. I've been lucky that I've been able to choose my own directions," he says. "I don't separate work from play, which has a good side and a bad side, as my wife will tell you. The only real success is in being able to spend your life in the way you choose."

Not surprisingly, Rowell's way takes effort. He runs 5 to 15 miles a day, usually on hills, when he's not climbing. If you're not a jogger, you may wonder why. The answer is simple: There is no activity as physically demanding as mountain climbing. Climbing Mount McKinley in one day (Rowell's ascent took 19 hours) required the energy-equivalent of four marathons back to back. Climbing in the Himalayas has its own astounding mathematics.

As Rowell explains it, the Himalayas have geography that is expanded by human frailty. A peak such as 29,000-foot Mount Everest is a great deal more than that in terms of climbing hours, and therefore, energy. At an altitude of 10,000 feet, a climber may go 2,000 feet an hour; at 20,000 feet, 800 feet an hour; and at 29,000 feet without oxygen, fewer than 200 feet an hour. In terms of human effort, Mount Everest is really a 50,000-foot mountain.

Is it worth it? The effort, the expense—$10,000 per climber for an Everest attempt? How can you spend such sums on a grown man's craving to climb a mountain with all the other needs in the world?

Rowell has an answer. A relationship needs to be preserved, he feels, between people and the world of the wild. Climbing, Rowell's way, is more than just a test of the ultimate macho man that some allege. It is, rather, an expression of the need to preserve the remaining wilderness on the planet, its solitude, its natural cycles of growth and wildlife, its beauty; he wants to share what he knows of this wilderness so that more people will care about its survival.

ROWELL HAS TASTED wilderness as few people have, especially during an unprecedented ski traverse of the Karakoram Himalayas of Pakistan. It was late in the winter of 1979–80. For 42 days, he and two other climbers, taking a 285-mile route on four of the largest glaciers in the Himalayas, used Nordic skis to carry 120-pound packs without porters at altitudes as high as 22,500 feet. There was also a three-week ski circumnavigation of Mount McKinley with three companions. The "great ice mountain," considered the coldest 20,000-foot mountain on earth, had never before been circled within the limits of its glacial system. The 90-mile route, entirely on the ice and snow of five glaciers, crossed three major buttresses.

"In high and wild places, adventure is life itself," Rowell says. But he brings it back, breathtaking shots of wilderness settings most of us will never see in person, perspectives by which to measure our meager horizons.

Even Rowell doesn't always reach the summit, however. From March to May of this year, he led a small party in an attempt to climb the treacherous west ridge of Everest. Bad weather plus sickness ended the ascent at about the 26,000-foot level, but for Rowell there were rewards, including the shooting of 140 rolls of film. For him, the wilderness is never the same, never dull, never anything but a savage joy.

Much of it is shared with Barbara. Although she doesn't always accompany him, Rowell's wife went with him last year to East Africa, where the two spent a month taking pictures. She also went to Nepal with him to direct the photography for a commercial catalog while Rowell was making a first ascent on Cholatse. Then she accompanied him and Robert Redford (just the three of them) trekking in Nepal for a month to the base of Everest. ("Yes," says Rowell, "he's a good guy; bright, witty.") She also went to Tibet this year and "up to near 19,000 feet on Everest with a trekking group while I was climbing."

Some of Rowell's presence of mind and sensitivity must have come from his parents. His father, who died in 1975 at age 90, was a UC Berkeley speech and philosophy professor. His mother, now 82, is an internationally renowned cello teacher who still travels extensively. Margaret Rowell is a kind of legend by herself; once a concert performer, she contracted and recovered from tuberculosis to relearn her music and become a teacher. She may be the source of her son's tenacity as well.

Galen Rowell, now 43, has made mountaineering, combined with his literary and photographic art, a successful business. He has two computers, full dual-disk models with word processing—one for writing, at his home in Berkeley, and one for Barbara and his photo researcher to use at his new office in Albany. He is a good planner, well organized and exceptionally thorough. He has traveled enough to be able to make detached judgments of people and events. He has known danger, and the threatened loss of his life and the purifying process it provides. His camera produces a visual poetry, but it is not so much his camera as his eye, and not so much his eye as his soul, that we are seeing.

—TOM JENKINS

Rowell: The thing that I like about it that I'm really not inwardly sorry that I had it this way. I don't know what I would do again. He has such a terrific love of music, and understanding of music. When I go on a trip with him he has those cassettes right there. He has the string quartets and the symphonies. When he climbed K2 he had to have Beethoven's Ninth with him. He knows his symphonies better than I do.

He has absolute pitch, so he can call me up and say, "Oh, Mother, I went to the movies last night and they had a cello playing the background. It was one of your Bach unaccompanied. I think it was your D-Minor Suite." Then he would start singing it absolutely in pitch to me and, yes, it would be the D-Minor Unaccompanied Suite.

He really has a beautiful musical mind, and such a love of good classical music--he enjoys other music, also, but he has such a love of good classical music that I have no regrets. I like to see a person enjoy music, really enjoy it, and I don't think they have to perform it.

Riess: Well, I'd imagine that for years everybody asked you, when he was young, what you were doing about all of that. So you probably developed a theory.

Rowell: No. I don't think so. I see what a mother can do with her child. I don't know that I could have done it with him because he was really rambunctious. He was always running every place. Just so inquisitive about everything under the sun. And climbing, climbing, climbing. I have a friend who remembers when he was hanging on on the picture rail in the living room. She says he was still in creepers. I know that wasn't so, but he used to climb up the fireplace and sit there [on the mantel].

One of the things that he did I cannot understand yet at all; I still try to get him to explain to me and I can't understand it. We have a very steep backyard that goes right straight up to Grizzly Peak Boulevard. In fact, nobody can walk up there. Nobody has in years and years. But he started digging tunnels underneath. They go way back in, with deep rooms where he said he could have eight or ten kids back there with him. So every kid in town knows Galen's tunnels. They would go up into his tunnels. They went, really, quite far up in that hill. Why I didn't worry more about them, I don't know. And the digging that he had to do in order to get them, I can't understand!

Riess: I'm getting the impression that he really brought himself up.

Rowell: I think he did a great deal. He read a great deal. By the time he was twelve he was so interested in rocks that it was an obsession with him. I don't know how that started. Of course, his father couldn't take him in the car, so I was the one who always took him, all sorts of places.

Grizzly Peak Boulevard--I can't drive it without thinking, "There's where I stopped the car and he would climb up that hill to get such and such a rock." I think that's where his climbing actually started, from his getting the minerals and letting himself down the side of those cliffs on the side of Grizzly Peak. I would say good-bye to him and sit in the car, and not see him 'til he came up again on the ropes.

Riess: And you had every confidence that he knew what he was doing?

Rowell: Well, no, not every confidence by any manner of means. I remember when Ed and I later drove him up to the Sierra, as we so often did, and here was--oh, my sakes, what's the hill?--Carson Hill, where there were just exactly the kinds of crystals that he wanted. You had to go down into a very great deep hole. When he got down, it was just one mass of rattlesnakes! He came up and told us about it. That I didn't like so well.

We took him all over every place for those rocks. By the time he was twelve he had the Harvard Book of Geology and he knew it thoroughly. He could go out and name anything under the sun for you.

Riess: Did he want to go on and become a geologist when he graduated from high school?

Rowell: I don't think that was in his mind. He just wanted to know it all. It was when he graduated from high school, I guess, that he and I took a trip East and did collect so many rocks that we had to send home I don't know how many hundreds of pounds. I told you about that, didn't I?

We sat on Christine Sanford's lawn. They were teaching at Vassar that year. They went out and got gunny sacks and we sent home hundreds and hundreds of pounds of rocks from there. Then we came on home, got more in our car, and broke an axle because the whole back of the car was loaded with them. [laughter]

Riess: Where are they now?

Rowell: Some of them are in the basement. I must show them to you sometime. Have you time now?

Riess: At the end of this tape I'd like to see that. You [also] wanted to read something that Ed had written to you from the hospital. But I want to do both of those things when we come to the end.

Rowell: I must tell a most interesting part. We took him on a Sierra Club base camp trip when he was about nine years old and that really was the beginning of everything for him, I think. Of course, we'd been to Yosemite so many times with him, and other places, but on that Sierra Club base camp trip, where he could go off on the trips with the leader himself, that's where he got interested in his rocks.

We came very often on those Sierra Club trips. They would be two weeks long. We would hike in on a long, long hard day's hike--particularly for Ed. It would be maybe forty or fifty people at least, sometimes more, in camp. We would all cook and do everything together, hike and so on. They had different kinds of hikes. They had plenty of long hikes, which Galen would go on, and plenty of hikes just right for me. If Ed didn't feel like going on the one that I went on, there was one for him. They called them Ambles, Rambles, and Scrambles for grandmothers, maiden aunts, etcetera. You could choose whatever hike you wanted for that day. Many days, of course, we just stayed in camp together. Galen was always on the run and always supervised.

On our 1957 Sierra Club trip one of the four people who first climbed the face of Half Dome was one of our assistant cooks in camp. Before that year, the big Yosemite cliffs had never been climbed; no place in Yosemite like El Capitan or Half Dome had been climbed. Anybody who climbed Half Dome, to me, was a hero. I must have passed some of that on to Galen.

I used to get up every morning at 4:30. I was the only person the head cook would let cook. He knew I loved to cook and he knew I loved to get up early. Nobody else would he ever let behind the stove, but I could. He would have the most delicious things for breakfast, always. Cinnamon snails with raisins in them, hot. Hundreds of them for breakfast. All sorts of the fanciest things. The chef was a very rich man from Los Angeles, with a great big home. That was his idea of a summer, to cook in the open for a gang!

Apple pancakes were one of his things. He'd tasted them at a restaurant near the St. Francis Hotel in San Francisco, and he went home and tried to make them, and didn't quite make them right. So he flew back to San Francisco to order them again to see exactly how they were made! [laughter] You can imagine the kind of a chef he was.

Rowell: But this fellow who had climbed Half Dome--I can't say his name at this moment, Galen will tell me [Jerry Galwas]--was his assistant. When it came time to go back--Galen was in high school then--another climber on the staff [Mike Loughman] said he would take Galen back with him, cross country. That meant no trails of any kind, just going up and down over the mountains, the sixty miles or so to Yosemite.

I was frightened. I just thought this was something! But in this fellow's hands, yes. So the two of them started off across the mountains. I, in fear and trembling, didn't hear a thing until I was to meet him at a Greyhound Bus depot, quite a number of days later, in Oakland. There he was, all by himself and able to do it.

From then on he was a mountaineer. He loved the mountains and spent every conceivable moment that he had in them. Climbing was nothing to him after he'd been on that trip.

Ed's Last Thoughts

Riess: Well, now you had some thoughts from Ed Rowell's last days that you wanted to get on tape?

Rowell: I'll just read you a few of Ed's comments when I visited him in the convalescent hospital. You can take whatever you want out.

I told him of Nicole's [his granddaughter] love of flowers and so on and he said, "Oh, is she my creation?" It's that choice of words that I think is so lovely.

I said, "Governor Reagan is ruining college education." (You can tell when this was.) "They no longer can afford good people--good professors--so they have to get me."

Ed said, "Now, don't emphasize that point too much. It might not be healthy." [laughter]

I read to him what Drew Pearson wrote about Ronald Reagan, and Ed said, "I hate him." [Ronald Reagan]

I said, "I do too." And he said, "Oh no, you couldn't, because I've already used up all the hate in the world on him."

Another time, I said, "How did you spend the night? And he said, "I spent it lying down."

Rowell: Then, another time he said--what I think is so true--"Everyone should experience sickness."

Once my car broke down on the way home from Stanford. I remember I just was beside myself, because I was going to be late and I spent every evening with him. So when I arrived, Ed was overjoyed to see me and he tried and tried to find words. Finally, in one burst, he said, "I can't collect enough English to convey to you how much I value your return."

Isn't that something! He said that all in one burst, after not being able to say a word. This was when my friends thought that Ed was completely senile. I knew how much was inside his fine mind.

April Mud Slide, 1958##

Riess: What happened to Galen's tunnels?

Rowell: In 1958 we had a terrific slide in the back. It was a time of great rains in Berkeley. It was in the afternoon. I was writing to the people who had bought our back lot and who were East, saying we had had terrific rains but not even a pebble had come down in our back. Just at that moment there was a great roar. I went out in time to see the whole thing rolling over and coming down our hillside. Our big crab apple tree, which was just beautiful, came right into our kitchen, broke the windows, and it stayed there and bloomed! [laughter] Along with it came enough mud to fill our whole back yard and just destroy everything.

We were aghast! It was quite a while before the fire department got there. When they did they told us to move everything out of this living room that we possibly could--all my instruments and the books, at least to the upper shelves.

Galen immediately called all his friends over. We moved everything over to the Weilerstein's across the street, and waited for more to come down.

Then the fire department said we had to get all that mud right out because it would break through the house. The neighbors all came to help. One of the neighbors I didn't even know, up on Latham Lane, ran a place for renting things for theatricals. They had a great big searchlight. They ran down to their establishment on Alcatraz, got that searchlight, and put it up on the roof so it shone down on the workers. The neighbors worked all night long

Rowell: with that searchlight. It was freezing cold and here they were, in mud above their waists, trying to get it away from the windows so that it wouldn't break the house. I never can thank them enough.

Riess: It sounds as much a nightmarish memory as the Berkeley fire.

Rowell: Oh, no. The Berkeley fire was much worse.

What did I do? What could I do. They were running around every place. Everybody needed hot coffee, hot gingerbread. I put everything I could think of in the oven, just putting it in and out, in and out, passing it out the windows. It was really a time to remember. Those neighbors, and of course the firemen when they got here, they really saved the place.

Riess: And what about those tunnels?

Rowell: Well, Dr. Einstein, Albert Einstein's son--I think I told you, didn't I, he lived right above us here?

Riess: No.

Rowell: Oh, I didn't? He played piano with me. He came down afterwards to look at it, and he said that he thought that Galen's tunnels probably saved that side from ruin, because it deflected the water from coming right down on top. The left-hand side, where Galen's tunnels were, was not touched.

It just tore out all our trees. We had pear trees, and apple, and crab apple, and we had two hundred different kinds of iris there that Salbach had given my husband. Gorgeous things.

Riess: Salbach? Who's that?

Rowell: The Salbach gardens here. Do you remember the chief librarian of the UC Library who was such a gardener? Sydney Mitchell. I have a book by him here. You must remember. The two of them used to give Ed everything for our garden. Those two hundred different varieties of iris just all went away. We've never been able to get up on that hillside since then. At that time it was terraced and had all sorts of things on it, but it has never had anything on it since then. It wasn't until I tasted rhubarb this year that I realized what a wonderful rhubarb crop we had right out by our window here. It has never been replanted. That was April 1958, really quite a while ago.

With that mud piled they thought that the foundation would be gone. But Ed had had it built so well that the stone wall on the back, when they finally got to it, wasn't even cracked. It's

Rowell: there right exactly now as it was. The only way they could get the dirt out was to put it on a conveyor belt that would run it from the back, clear around the house, and dump it into dump trucks out on the street. So they did that. It was June before they finished.

That happened in April 1958 and Galen and I were going to call off our trip across the country because of the great expense of all of this. Ed said, "Expenses? What of expenses? We've got lots of them. Go ahead." [laughter] That was Ed' expression, which I thought was simply delightful, that way he would turn things. So he insisted that we go on.

Duets With Dr. Einstein

Riess: So you had an Einstein in your backyard.

Rowell: Dr. Einstein, yes. His father Albert, as you know, was a very fine musician, played the violin. This son, Hans Albert Einstein, played the piano. He lived directly behind us. We met at an afternoon tea, and he said, "Oh, we've got to play together. So he would come down every Tuesday morning, probably for fifteen years, off and on, and we would play Beethoven or Brahms, or something. Ed loved that. We started playing together in the early 1950s, and stopped with Ed's hospitalization, but then continued to the end of his life.

We often picnicked together in the Berkeley hills. I remember one special time when the sun sank over the Golden Gate as the moon rose over Mt. Diablo. And his daughter would run down from their house, down our back steps to play with Galen. Dr. Einstein died in 1973. He collapsed after he gave a lecture in July, in Wood's Hole, Massachusetts, and died. I had to arrange the music for the services at The Faculty Club.

What I loved playing the most with him was the Brahms lieder and the Schubert lieder that his father had always had. He knew that German lieder as nobody I have ever seen. I would read the vocal parts, sitting there with him, and every time we had one that he had been taught as a child, he would be absolutely different--you could just tell by his back.

I'd say, "Tell me the words." We had more fun doing that than almost anything else. I told Paul Rolland later about that. He said, "Margaret, just take some of that and publish it." But I never have. Somebody should publish volumes of that for the cello.

Rowell: When Leonard Rose played at the Rostropovich Congress in Washington, D.C. this summer, for his encore he came out and played "Du Bist die Ruhe" of Schubert. That's just one of those many, many songs that makes a beautiful cello solo. It so happens that David Popper arranged that for cello many years ago, but it could be done by anybody today. I've always been going to have the time to do it and I've never done it.

Riess: Did you sing along when you were playing with him?

Rowell: Me? [laughter]

Riess: I know! But I thought I might catch you in the moment.

Rowell: No. But those are songs and the cello has to sing. There's no other way of doing them except to phrase them and "sing" them exactly that way. To see Dr. Einstein's back begin to move in that rhythm that was just the rhythm of the song meant so much to me. We used to have a wonderful time together.

Thelma Yellin*

Rowell: You asked about Thelma Yellin some place.

Riess: Yes, I did.

Rowell: Thelma Yellin, a fine cellist from Israel, came into my life through my Womens International League for Peace and Freedom, to which I gave energy and time. She had friends in Santa Barbara who contacted me. Her brother, Norman Bentwich, was the first attorney general for Israel. He and his wife, Lord and Lady Bentwich, came to visit Ed and myself and I have pictures of us together. Thelma had studied at the Royal Academy in London and later with Casals whom she adored. She had already lost her husband when I met her, but it was my good fortune to get to know more of her illustrious family.

Her sister Margery came and lived with us for at least six months, and was a great addition to our family. She had been a very fine violinist and brought her violin with her. Her first main teacher was Eugene Ysaye; the second one, Fritz Kreisler.

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*[recorded October 24, 1983]

Rowell: (I am told by other members of the family that he fell in love with her.) Her last teacher was Leopold Auer. She would come down from her bedroom and sit and watch me teach. Once in a while she would play with our neighbor Bernard Abramowitsch, and on a couple of occasions I brought out my cello and we played trios. She had a rare beautiful violin and a beautiful tone.

This is a real era, a whole era in my life. Margery was here when Galen was about two, I guess, and stayed practically a year. Everybody was starving over there [Jerusalem], and she couldn't get over the fact that people took transportation here. She'd put on her tennis shoes--she was I would say in her seventies then--and run down to the campus for something, and then run back up. If she had half a piece of bread she would stick it up in my cupboard--not in the refrigerator, but in the cupboard--and say, "That's for tomorrow." She was so used to saving every little crumb of anything, and not eating too much. She was very thin. But a more lovely woman I never had in my home. I just adored her.

Thelma was a more elgant person; Margery was just somebody you'd put your arms around and love, and Thelma was a real cellist. She came on a concert tour really, and I arranged the concert at the Piano Club. I have all the programs and everything else for that. She was a good cellist. She wasn't a great cellist. But she was a lovely human being.

Then there was a third sister, Carmel Forsythe. Carmel is the one that I still see. I just got a letter from her last week. Carmel comes to vist me each summer from Maine. She has an extraordinary history. She was the pianist of the family. She married Rabbi [Louis] Finkelstein, president of the Jewish Theological Seminary, and they had several children. She found, as a housewife, the laws of the Orthodox Jewish faith too binding. She was gradually shifting to Christian Science. The food, the preparation, the huge number of dishes in the cupboards seemed too artificial for her, and she finally shocked her family by leaving her husband. Of course she was ex-communicated or whatever they do, and declared dead on the books by the synagogue. She has an excellent relationship today with her children and their children. She is in the process now (I spoke to her on the phone today) of writing the history of her sister Margery's life. She says that the happiest time in Margery's life was here in Berkeley.

They're just a remarkable family. Each one writes a book about the other one. They've kept all my letters and are putting them in some book they're writing now! [laughter]

I wish people didn't keep [borrowed] books, because I don't know where the books are that they've written.

Worrying, Sharing Experiences with Friends

[Interview 7: October 25, 1982]

Rowell: Of course I worry about Galen, every time he's gone. But I always say, "I would be doing it if I could."

Riess: I read High and Wild last night, most of it, including the episode where he falls with Ned Gillette and loses his teeth and rips open his chin.

Rowell: I tell you, that was terrible, and the way it got to me was that his head had been cracked open! That was the way it came down to me, when they rushed him into the hospital and so on. Then I found out it was only that the lip was split wide open on each side, flying back like this.

How there was that one little rope, out of the snow! That was just really a terrific miracle, to have that rope that he could reach out and grab. Nobody will ever know why it was there.

Riess: If there were any question I would raise about High and Wild, it is why Galen didn't let himself go in terms of being the philosopher that he could be. You say it's a miracle that this and that happened. Why doesn't he? Isn't he a philosopher?

Rowell: I think so, but he isn't a preacher. My husband was a preacher, but Galen isn't. He leaves all that to your imagination. He can't stand the sentimental of any kind. He just doesn't use it.

Oh, you're getting this down?

Riess: Yes.

Rowell: I think this is interesting. He feels very deeply but he doesn't express it as his father would have. His father, as you know, loved to write and was a philosopher, and had that philosophical trend of turning things that way. I would say Galen almost avoids it. He expresses himself beautifully in words, and leaves that other to you to imagine.

Riess: I think people would say, "How does she stand it? Doesn't she worry all the time?"

Rowell: I worry terribly. You just ask Galen. He gets disgusted with me. After three weeks on an expedition when I haven't heard, and I'm sure I should have heard, then I worry. If it's a place like K2 or some place where I know they never get any messages out, there's no way, why then I know I have to wait a couple of months.

Rowell: The terrible part about it is that I usually worry at the right time. Almost always it has been at some time when he has been in a great deal of trouble or given out of food, or something like that. I'll just see him out there, as I did the time he was going around K2 and doing all that. I saw where they were having trouble.

On K2 I knew. My friends would come and sit with me at night just to help me through certain times, when I hadn't heard for a long time, and when I heard I knew that he was not well. He did have pneumonia, which you don't like to have at a high elevation. They had to pull him down.

I know how to worry, really worry. But it's very seldom because, as I say, there's nothing in the world I would rather do than to be able to do what he's doing.

I listened in this morning, while I was dressing, to the marathon running in New York. I thought, no. I love the idea of doing it, but I would not want to run a twenty-six mile marathon. I would want to be hiking along the trails and seeing everything.

That's Galen too. He found that out quite early. He took a very dear friend of his, a wonderful skier, on one of his trips. They had so much in common and they were going to spend time really out in the wilds, with snow and ice all the time. Galen was so disappointed, because when he's traveling and he sees something while we're going along down the mountainside, he wants to go down and investigate. He's his father and grandfather in that. The other boy, of course, being a skier, wanted to keep right on skiing right to the destination.

I have very much of that in me. If I see a flower, or if I see something else, I'll stop anytime and investigate it. He wanted to see what kind of a tree that was, what kind of a trunk this was, and the other person would get disgusted at their not keeping to their goal. I think that makes it very hard for Galen sometimes, when he's with a partner who he enjoys but can't experience that with.

It's like two people married, where there are just things that upset them a little bit. I can see where Galen would very much upset somebody who had his goal to get right ahead skiing, and then have somebody want to go down to see what a tree trunk's like.

Riess: Yes. It's nice to be able to share that. When you are taking your trips, you like to go with somebody, don't you?

Rowell: Yes. You know, I love people and yet I find I am very solitary. (I think Galen is too, to quite an extent.) Isn't that funny? I'm just finding it out more now. Finding out, for instance, that I have no longing--I'm sorry to say this--to go to the finest retirement place in the world, where I'll be surrounded with people, three meals a day. Lovely people, wonderful people. I would rather just eat my little soup out in the kitchen.

Riess: But, Margaret, the world comes to you.

Rowell: No.

Riess: Well, I mean so many interesting people are coming to you.

Rowell: No, I love being solitary. I jumped in my car night before last and ran down to the Oakland Ballet. Bonnie Hampton had given me two tickets. She was playing for it. I was teaching all day, so I didn't get a chance to call. When I began calling everybody, could I find anybody that wanted to go with me?

But I wouldn't hesitate a moment. I enjoy going to things alone. When I got down there? "You drove your car down, and you came alone? Oh, no!" And I said, "Why not? I love to sit in the theater." I really enjoy experiencing things in the solitary, as well as with friends. Now, I think I said that to some of my friends and I think they immediately had the wrong idea about me. I love to be with them.

Another thing I said was that I didn't usually make long, long conversations over the telephone with friends. And I don't. I think I was brought up in the New England style, that after three minutes you begin to think what you're doing. But all my friends visit on the phone a half hour or three-quarters of an hour with their friends. I couldn't do that. A whole group of my very closest friends had a discussion for the first time on this. I find out now they don't call me [laughter], because they think I don't like to be called.

I love to be telephoned! You know I do. I jump up and answer. I never think of cutting off my telephone. But I tend not to have that nice long conversation. Many of my friends say they have forty-five minute conversations with their children or somebody in the East. They do it regularly. And I can see that it would be good. I don't tend to use the phone that way. I think I will have to, at my age, start in doing it.

Riess: [laughter] No, you don't, you don't have to change at all.

X STUDENTS OF MARGARET AVERY ROWELL

Goals in Teaching

Riess: A friend of yours, Mary Flanders, said, "You know, the most amazing thing about Margaret is that her technique keeps changing. She keeps teaching a new way. She goes off to some workshop and she comes back with something new."

I said, "That doesn't sound like her to me."

Rowell: I don't think I've changed. This is very interesting because, you see, I did start her husband [Ned Flanders] at nine years of age, when I was in my twenties. Probably, at that stage of the game, I taught very much the way I had been taught, which is a very good way, but I call it old-fashioned.

Riess: Workmanlike?

Rowell: Very workmanlike. You teach the first position and you keep them there for at least a year, or something like that. (I wasn't kept that way at that particular time.) Then you learn the fourth position, and then you learn how to connect those two positions. This is a very good way of learning.

Where I differ from that is not at all in the coming back to that absolute carefulness of finding everything, but is in giving the student the picture of the overall first. I compare that to a jigsaw puzzle. If you have five pieces if you're five years old, or a hundred pieces if you're ten years old, to put together, if there are some pieces that are just, say, a solid tan or something very uninteresting, you don't throw them away, because you know they're of value and you know you're going to find exactly the right place to put them in. In that right place, it's just as important as the most brilliantly colored piece in that jigsaw puzzle.

Rowell: It is that whole before the parts that I want every child to see, and to feel with their body, with their hands. If they can get that feel of going up and down the strings and being just as comfortable in those upper regions as the lower regions--being just as comfortable in what I would call eighth or ninth position as in first position.

It would be like a child being just as comfortable living on this hillside as living down in the flats. The fact that I have to climb up and down here every day in my car doesn't bother me at all. People say, "Oh, how can you take it?" Well, I just don't think about it, because if you're familiar with it you do it easily. I see my hands like rubber tires in a car and I'm in that car driving it. It can go anyplace with the rubber tires. The minute I slam down with heavy steel or put on the brakes, I'm gone.

I want every child to get the feel of the instrument itself, the contact of the fingers with the strings, being a supple suction and not a hard brittle contact. If you start them that way, then they don't go through periods of tension. Then, when you come back to a very careful first position, they see how that fits into the whole. They're much more likely to be willing to practice hard on it, wanting it to be perfect, in order to go on to the next ones that you connect with it.

Every single time they come, every child, every adult, sits down there and does their one-finger scales up the full length of the whole string, experiencing playing in tune with beautiful tone before they start in playing anything else. But then they play very carefully what they play.

The Master Class Experience

Riess: Over the years, you've gone to various summer institutes, and come in contact with some great master cellist/performers, and learned something every time. How do you incorporate this?

Rowell: Oh, you do. You learn from the master performers by looking at them, not by what they say, because very few of the master performers are very great teachers. For coaching you on the beauty of the music, yes, but most great performers are so natural that they don't necessarily teach.

Rowell: Casals would never take a student even. He would never take a beginner, of course. They had to be very, very much of a complete cello player before he would accept them for anything. Then he would work and work with them. I would say the same with Rostropovich. They are great interpreters of music; that's where their greatness lies.

I'm afraid I haven't attended as many [as I'd have liked]. I go to all those summer things, but I'm always teaching in them myself.

Riess: Did you play for Rostropovich or Casals?

Rowell: No, I didn't.

Riess: I knew the answer to that. You really had stopped being a performer long before you came in contact with those people. You might have gotten something wonderful out of it, or not, do you think?

Rowell: Performing myself? No. I don't think so. You see, I was never at my best performing for other people. (Trio was something different.) I loved music so terrifically, and I find that in my own students, very much. Some of my students who, to me, are the most beautiful in their cello playing are always terrifically nervous when they play. Other ones aren't. It isn't necessarily this way, but some of them are that way.

I begin to understand it. You have a feeling that you could never, never come up to your own standards of what you want to hear. Some people are perfectly satisfied with what they hear when they play. They're perfectly satisfied with it. I have to watch out for them, because then they can't go ahead. If they make a few mistakes they say, "Oh, what of it! Casals makes mistakes." And maybe he does, but I want them to grow in their realization of what they can express.

Bonnie Bell Hampton

Rowell: But with me and with some of my students that I understand so completely--I think Bonnie is one of them--they never can completely come up to what they know they can do musically. There's where I think if you have that musical goal of really making the music mean something to the person who's hearing it, you have to be absolutely free of fear. And you have to be free of everything else, because you have to enter into the music and not your playing, not yourself. But this is very hard to do in front of an audience.

Riess: That's interesting. After all, if Bonnie's not comfortable--

Rowell: Oh, she is. I watched her play the other night for the Oakland Ballet. But I've watched her through the years. She goes through many different periods. She still is in one. Bonnie reminds me of a painter, a Picasso, with an early period, a blue period, pink period, and this and that. Now she's very much in her modern period, doing almost entirely moderns when she gives concerts, as she did at Carnegie Hall last year. It was almost entirely modern.

Some of her periods are very beautiful periods. Some of them, like the moderns, I say, "Oh, I'm not so sure." Sometimes I've wished there was some of the old in it too, as I do in Picasso. But I think she probably has explored more cello music than any other cellist I know in this country.

Riess: Did she start with you?

Rowell: Yes. Well, she took a few lessons from Mary Claudio, but then she left it off entirely. So I would say I started her, at nine years of age. Her mother had brought her up to my home at two years of age and sat her down on this rug and said, "You're going to teach her some day." I remember that very well. I did, and I enjoyed her from the very start.

She had had piano from Mr. Alexander Raab, a very fine pianist who'd come over from Vienna to teach in Berkeley. So she had an excellent background of that. She was almost too facile. She had the type of fingers that could really work on that instrument. I had to get her more solid and more into the instrument rather than, as I do with most people, teaching them flexibility.

She wanted to play, and she had a mother who wanted her to play very much, who was always right there. So she did appear very early in things. When she was eleven and twelve she was playing beautiful solos. At thirteen she dedicated the Berkeley Community Theater with the Saint Saens concerto, with the orchestra, and did a beautiful job of it. She soloed with the San Francisco Symphony about the same time. She progressed rapidly. I always had to watch out to keep her with a basic security.

Very early I wanted her to work with Casals. I was so anxious. We went five years without hearing from Casals. At the time of the Spanish [Civil] War he had fled Spain and would not go back, and nobody knew where he was living. The first indication that I had that he was alive was when Professor [Rudolph] Schevill phoned me and said, "I've just had a letter from Casals and he is alive." That was the first person in the United States to get a letter, as far

Rowell: as I know. That was so exciting. Casals was my hero. All I could think of was getting Bonnie over to him, because nobody had heard him play yet.

Riess: Bonnie was your star at that point?

Rowell: Well, she had advanced rapidly. I had several who were playing very well at that time. Bonnie had a young friend who was in the same grade that she dragged home and said, "This kid plays cello too, and you have to teach her." So I taught Ellen Odhner. The two of them really were just wonderful together. Ellen didn't have the background that Bonnie had, but the two of them played duets together--they did everything together--and progressed together. They are very good friends right to this day.

Bonnie, I think a year or so ago, grabbed Ellen and said, "We'll give a concert together," and they gave a concert together down at Unitarian Fellowship where we always held Cello Club. Of course, everybody came to it. They played duets, they played solos, they did everything.

Ellen just played beautifully. She earns her living playing in San Francisco. She has raised a family. I think she's had two or three mariages and I don't know how many children, whom she adores. She works at night in a theater so she has all day with her children, and she loves it.

But Bonnie is something very special, musically. It is the deep musicianship of Bonnie which shows through. No matter which period she's in, she's always extremely musical. As a coach also. Now, she is one who has learned to be a teacher. At first when you are a wonderful player you are able to coach very well, but you don't necessarily teach the technical ways of getting to be able to do what you want to do. But Bonnie in the last few years has developed into a simply magnificent teacher and coach, and player, and a beautiful human being. I wish she'd think more of herself, but she's always thinking of other people and doing too much for them.

Riess: What happened about Casals?

Rowell: Oh, yes.

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Rowell: Her mother went with her. She may not have even been fifteen yet, but I think she was.

Rowell: I gave her the G-Minor Beethoven Sonata we'd been working on. Of all things to take without a piano part or without a pianist or anything else! To sit down and play a note, "bum," and then wait two measures and then go "bum-ba-dee-da-dum" is not the way to play. And we got ready in such a hurry that I didn't feel that she was really prepared. I did worry about it.

I think that Casals felt very much the same way. He felt that she was very talented but that she needed much more preparation to come to him. I'm not surprised at all. She did come back and work very, very hard. She's been back to him so many times, as you know, and stayed over a whole year, and then gone to Puerto Rico, where she was on the first stand year after year for his big concerts in the summertime. She shared the first stand with Leslie Parnas, who is one of our great cellists of this era.

I would say that I am proud of Bonnie Hampton as a human being, first, and then as a wonderful musician. If she were just a musician I would have others, too. But it's that combination that sets her apart from everybody else, as it did Casals.

Riess: When she came back from these times with Casals, could you see what was new and different?

Rowell: Not technically at all, because he does not teach technique in the least.

Riess: But, I mean, in her interpretation?

Rowell: I don't know. You don't see those things instantly. Do you see what I mean?

Riess: Would she be able to tell you, when she came back, what she had learned?

Rowell: That isn't necessary. But she was inspired.

Riess: I'm trying to demystify the process.

Rowell: I think all those things are internal. It's what you get from being with that human being. Now, Casals does play a great deal for his students, or always did. Surely, hearing him play, you want to copy that marvelous quality, which is fine. You go through that period just as an artist does. It's a very marvelous period.

Riess: And when she comes up to you, as she continues to over the years, what is she now looking for from you?

Rowell: Well, what I try to give is just the solid basis of playing. I want to give a student the whole feeling for the instrument, knowing the instrument inside out, being able to do anything you want to on it. If they want to play double forte, they can play double forte without scratching. If they want to play triple piano, they can play triple piano without just whispering, still have contact with the string. I want to answer all these things for them so that they themselves can grow into the artist they want to.

I'm different from other teachers in that most teachers do have them copy measure for measure the way you do it. I want to give the students the tools to work with, the means. That's what I'm working with them on all the time. Sometimes they get a little bit exasperated because, I think, I overdo the thing of giving them the tools rather than having them copy the beautiful music. I would rather have the music almost imperfect at the beginning and have them struggling through to get what they want, as an artist would on paper. Give them the techniques so that eventually they can have their own style.

Now, that's what I've seen with Bonnie Hampton. She doesn't play like anybody else. One of the wonderful things I love is that none of my students play alike. If you were to take my two students who are at the conservatory, Bonnie Hampton and Renie Sharp, I would say they were as different as black and white from each other in their approach to exactly the same piece. And yet I am very happy with the way they both do it. I can go to a concert by one of them and sit back and enjoy it. I can go to a concert by the other one and sit back and enjoy it.

Riess: That's very interesting. You say that Bonnie still comes up to play for you. I was asking what she is looking for from you now.

Rowell: Oh, well, we all want another ear, as an artist wants another eye. We want an inner ear to listen to us, and also just to play for us. It is very seldom I have anything to really say to her. If I don't like where she takes something, or I think something isn't rhythmically right there or something, of course I would tell her. But that's very seldom.

With Renie it's a different matter, because Renie has taken from me consistantly during the last twenty years. I can tell her much more than I would ever think of telling Bonnie, I think.

Paul Tobias

Riess: Have your women students, as a group, been more satisfying?

Rowell: No. I would say I've probably taught more men. Paul Tobias is one, of course. I taught him and he still keeps coming back. Whenever he has something new, like the Prokofiev Symphony Concertante, which I don't know, he comes and spends almost a week learning it and then goes and plays it with some symphony.

Riess: I couldn't get you to generalize about women versus men?

Rowell: No, not at all.

Riess: Well, let's talk more about Paul Tobias and other individual students.

Rowell: I think it's wonderful to talk about the individuals, because I enjoy each one of my students. I enjoy those who don't go on to become professionals just as much as those who do.

Paul Tobias I have enjoyed very much because he had an innate talent that is right there. It is the kind of a talent that I respect so much. It isn't just facility, running around on the instrument. It's something very clear and deep. I wish I could think of all the people that he has been compared to. Among the cellists they say he's nearest to Emmanuel Feuermann, of whom you may not have heard. Emmanuel Feuermann died in, I think, 1940.

Paul is very clear. His mind is a mind that remembers remarkably the whole thing, the phrase, the quality and everything at once. We laugh now. He says he didn't really practice that much. But he memorized so quickly that he had everything almost by memory.

Very early there was the International Musicians Congress of Strings. Each union could send one student to the orchestra. I think he went four different years for San Francisco.

Riess: The local union judged the competition?

Rowell: Yes. Before he won it, the first year I sent him to try out, I was shocked: I knew he played beautifully; I had no doubt in sending him over to try out, but the concert master of the symphony called me back afterwards and he said, "Well, Margaret, Paul astounded us, he played so beautifully. Then we put the orchestra parts up there for him to read and he didn't read them well at all. So, we can't send him."

Rowell: I was utterly crushed. This shows not what a good teacher I was, but what a good teacher I wasn't! What was happening was that he took anything and memorized it as soon as he learned it, so that he didn't have to read it. All the time he looked as if he were reading notes, he was really playing from memory. While it was a wonderful thing and has stood him in very good stead through the years, I had to develop the other side of him.

I did it in the most peculiar way. I had a lot of horrible cello music in what I call my "horror room," where I keep everything because I can't stand to throw a piece of music away. In the old KGO days, I sometimes had to play a solo every day. I was always running to Sherman and Clay to find out what the new solos were. I've never taken a piece of music out on approval. That is, I take it out on approval, but I never return it. I think for every ten of those solos there were nine that I would never play in the world, they were so bad. I had them piled up in my horror room.

What I would do would be to take a pile of that music, not let him glance at it, and give it to Paul's father who used to bring him over from San Francisco every week for his lesson, and who played the piano himself. Paul was to play one of those straight through, without stopping, and then not look at it again, and then play the next one, bring that pile back and I'd give them a new pile the next week. I really think [that] through that he got to really learn to read music. I had to get music he never had heard before.

I knew he could do it. I knew it was simply getting the ear tuned to that printed note, to his cello, and that was all. He had the ear through to his cello, without the printed note. When he had a printed note up there that he didn't know what it was and he had to connect it with those two, he soon could.

He went to the competition the next year. He went every year after that and enjoyed it tremendously.

Digression: Music for the Cello

Riess: Just a quick tangent. Who writes all this horrible cello music? What are these little solo pieces? They were designed for recitals?

Rowell: There's so much written now. There was so little available for the cello in those early days. Now, in the last twenty years the cello literature has developed terrifically, in many ways. There are more arrangements than there were--Brahms songs, and Schubert.

But there is also what I would call trash, written by people especially of the sentimental era of music in the early 1900s. Some are not easy, but I don't call them beautiful pieces of music, not music that I would want my students to spend time on--though I would just as soon that they spend some time on those as on some of the etudes. I consider them historical rather than of value. Let me say that they belong to that period.

I've seen the eras change so. When I first started the cello, oh, the music was so totally different. You played the "Berceuse" from Jocelyn for a cello solo. You played "The Evening Star" from Tannhäuser. You played all sorts of things. These were written as cello solos and you played them. "The Rosary." Oh yes, I used to play all sorts of things, as well as the things written by cellists, like the perpetual motion pieces and all of those.

Even those I don't give to my students to play in public, but I give them--instead of etudes--the "Scherzo" of Van Goens. I don't like it now because I think it's terribly dated, but it's a nice little fast piece and I find students like it. I wouldn't want them to put it on their programs, but I love to have them learn it because it teaches them so much.

Riess: It sounds like the kind of music you're describing is just transcription from piano music.

Rowell: No. There's just loads of it written for original cello.

Riess: Well, like "The Evening Star" from Tannhäuser.

Rowell: Well, yes. Like that. Those things are, but there was just loads written. I just had a piece in there this morning when I was looking through, a lovely piece that I like very much, that I haven't heard lately, "Air" by Hure, an English person. That was played very much in my young days. I pull it out to try to get my students to play it today, but they won't. It's a beautiful piece. I first got it from the London String Quartet.

Riess: We talked once, before we started interviewing, about why the cello had become popular. I was wondering what this kind of music had to do with it? Is the cello literature just a replication of piano music?

Rowell: No. Cello has its own music so much, now. More is written for cello today than you can possibly imagine. I'm just kept busy. I think my first real taste of modern music written for cello was the eleven years I taught at San Francisco State. There I came across the young composers writing for cello, coming in with the most difficult things, almost impossible to play I thought at that time. By old standards it was impossible to play.

Riess: Because of the phrasing or what?

Rowell: It went all over the instrument, scooting up on the lower strings and doing everything under the sun. Lots of thumb position, lots of double stops, lots of everything, as the young composers would do without much thought of a melodic thing--much more a technical thing. They would come in and in three weeks I'd have to get them ready to play these very difficult pieces. They'd have to play the new work for a big convention of music educators in San Diego or some place. It was exciting, and I still love to get my hands on music that has never been played.

I found it very stimulating, and I still do, to take those compositions that I've never seen before and work them out with students. I get a huge kick out of it and I think they do too. It happens that I don't necessarily prefer that music, but I love to dig it out and really teach it, and get them to fit it to the instrument. It's a real challenge.

I think the greatest challenge I've had is the Imbrie concerto for cello and orchestra. That was the greatest challenge, to have a student whom I did not think was that advanced, at UC--she's not even five feet, and she must weigh not over ninety pounds, and she has the littlest hands I've ever seen--for her to try to play this huge concerto that must last a half an hour and goes all over the instrument, double stops and everything that, to me, is "uncellistic." I call it a very uncellistic piece, but it was a challenge. We took it on and I don't know when I've ever enjoyed anything more.

Riess: I wonder if one would have more difficulty memorizing modern music than old?

Rowell: Yes and no.

Riess: It doesn't make any difference?

Rowell: You may have heard of Penderecki? Paul Tobias played the Penderecki Concerto with the New York Philharmonic, with [Kyzysztof] Penderecki conducting. Then he played, of course, the Bernstein with Bernstein conducting. I wish I could think of some of the other modern composers.

Riess: I don't mean whether he could do it or not. I'm thinking about the ease of memorizing things that don't have a singing melody.

Rowell: This is what I mean. Of course Paul memorized it. He memorizes everything. He was here a couple of weeks ago with me for the full week. The very last day I said, "Oh, Paul, the thing I loved to hear you play is the Schubert 'Arpeggione.' You always played that so beautifully."

He said, "Margaret, I haven't touched it in five years."

I said, "Before you go, just play it for me."

He took out his cello, sat down, and he played all of that, the whole thing from the beginning to the end without stopping, and it was absolutely incredibly beautiful. He was in the best of form, of course, because he'd just been practicing hours. Not a note of it where he had to stop and ponder or anything, either for memory or for technique.

Riess: Or feeling.

Rowell: Yes. And that, I think, is one of the hardest pieces to play on the cello. But it's all right there with him. I think it was about sixteen concertos--I saw the list--that he said he had ready to play at any time. Three he'd have to have two weeks notice on. [laughter] That's the way he goes around.

Paul is a wonderful human being and he's getting on to himself now, much more able to live with himself than he has been. He's got two sides inside of him and they're always fighting. But he's much more whole than he ever has been. If he can, he will do beautifully. He will enjoy living. He's got a beautiful wife and he's very good to her. They enjoy living together. They enjoy taking vacations. They enjoy taking walks. They enjoy going to the fish market or the vegetable market together. They enjoy doing things together, which I think is just remarkable for a musician, not wishing he was home practicing.

Riess: Yes. I often wonder about musicians, "How are they to live with?"

Rowell: Paul hasn't always been easy, and he knows it. But I think he's still developing. So, we'll wait and see.*

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*I have just spent several days with them in New York and I've never felt more completely at home with a couple who seem to have a real giving marriage. It's great growth on Paul's part. His future is ahead of him. [M. Rowell]

Cathy Allen, Scott Kluksdahl, Gerard Leclerc; William Pleeth, Leonard Rose, Pierre Fournier

Riess: Who else have you sent to Casals, other than Bonnie?

Rowell: No one to Casals. That's the only time I've ever simply packed somebody up and sent them off with a ticket. However, Cathy Allen, who did the Imbrie concerto, got the Hertz Scholarship this year. Just this last Monday I sent her off to England. There she will study with William Pleeth, to whom I wrote. Pleeth taught Jacqueline Du Pré, whom I think is one of the greatest cellists who ever lived.

I sent her off, almost in fear and trembling, because he is such a coach and not a teacher, and I'm not sure she's absolutely ready for him yet. She left in the morning. She was here at six o'clock the night before. The next afternoon my telephone rang and there was my dearest friend in London, Eileen Palmer, who said, "Well, I've got your girl right here." She was being put up by my friend. I think she's going to do very well.

Riess: In an arrangement like that with Pleeth, is it the teacher who makes the contact and writes the letters?

Rowell: Not always. I very seldom do it for my students. Renie Sharp does it entirely for her students. She always sees that her students go to the very finest teachers and arranges for it.

My Scott Kluksdahl, whom I enjoy very, very much--I expect great things from him, he can be a wonderful cellist--he is just entering his second year at Harvard. I did write Leonard Rose and asked him if he would take him as a student. Scott tried out. Leonard only teaches at Juilliard, but he wrote back and said he would take him as a student, no matter where he was, he would make an exception for him. He met Scott with his car at the station [in New York] as he came in, gave him his lesson, and then took him back in his car. That was pretty nice of him. But Scott only got a few lessons a year from him because Leonard Rose is so busy and, evidently, Harvard and Juilliard are hundreds of miles apart and it's hard to get there with a cello. I don't know how it's going to work out this year yet.

Riess: How do you match your students with these great people?

Rowell: Scott would not consider taking from anybody except Leonard Rose. There was nobody he wanted to take from. Leonard Rose is not young any more and does not have time to teach, but he just wouldn't take from anybody else. So there was no doubt there.

Rowell: Another one of my students who has gone ahead a great deal is Gerard Leclerc. Jerry was my student at the conservatory. I knew he was musical, but he had many, many technical problems. He would fall to pieces under any situation. We didn't, any of us, hold out a lot of hope for anything he would do. He was over six feet tall and gangly and he sort of threw himself around the instrument. But he never got through anything. So, it was hard.

Somehow, the last year at the conservatory things began to come through. He was very excited when Fournier came there for a master class. Fournier was very happy with his playing and complimentary to him. Of course, Jerry appreciated that so much that he couldn't wait to get over to Switzerlznd to study with Fournier, which he did.

Jerry had a very severe case of diabetes and was in the hospital. I told you a little bit about him [p. 122]. He did his senior recital, the Kodaly unaccompanied, the E-flat Major Bach unaccompanied, and the Benjamin Britten unaccompanied. Two days after that he was in the hospital, almost collapsed from his diabetes, which he didn't even know he had. He had to postpone going to Switzerland right away, but he's been there ever since and is doing very well. He's the solo cellist of a chamber orchestra there, which pays enough for him to do that, and he goes around giving concerts in all the little places. I get a card from him just about every week, and I got a phone call just this last week.

He gave a Wigmore Hall concert in London last year. That's quite a concert. His chamber orchestra came to the United States to tour around New York and that area. He's coming again this year for a New York concert.

Riess: Do you send students to teachers because of a match that you see, or because you're filling in some blanks in their education?

Rowell: I think a teacher-pupil relationship is awfully hard. It is a one-to-one relationship and you have to have such a deep respect. Usually what happens is that the students, as in Scott's case, go East and try out for all these different teachers. Then they, really see which one they want to study with. I would say Scott had five choices, but there was only one for him.

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Rowell: Not later than April of the year before, they go back and try out in New York, in Boston, at Yale and up at Eastman--where the conservatories are. They're trying out at all those different places, but I would say, basically, the teacher is being tried. The student comes back knowing which one they want to study with, usually.

Riess: After looking at one of your music magazines and seeing that so many cellists, performers, list four or five teachers they have studied with, I wondered how realistic it was.

Rowell: It isn't realistic. They seem to think that it is very, very impressive to put all that down. Actually, the great cellists of all time studied with very few teachers. I think it's so important for students to know that. Sometimes too many teachers can mix you up. There can be more than one right approach, and when you have to completely change to another person's "right" approach it may throw you, if you've really become addicted to the one you're on.

I shudder when I see they "studied with Rostropovich," when all they did was to come out to a master class and maybe play twice for him. That's not studying with a person. When they list master classes I'm rather horrified. I love to see a person stay with a teacher over a long period of time.

Riess: The people that you have sent your students to are all people you knew yourself?

Rowell: I don't send the students. They choose them, really. I make them choose them. I'm terrible about that. I simply will not. To me, selecting the children's teacher is exactly like the Chinese still selecting the wife. I consider this a very serious thing. The person may be absolutely tops, but if you aren't going to really enjoy working with him there's no use of you spending a hundred dollars a lesson on him.

Einar Jeffrey Holm

Riess: We've talked about Paul and Scott and Gerard. Who are some others?

Rowell: I must bring Jeff in here. Jeff writes me every year and he goes now by the name of Einar, but he was Einar Jeffrey Holm.

I first knew Jeff--I can't remember what the year was, but Madi Bacon was in charge of the San Francisco Boys Chorus, and she asked me for somebody to play a cello solo for one of the things, so Bonnie played the "Hungarian Rhapsody," which she played very well. I went over to hear her play it. A little boy, just a small boy, with light blond hair, and of course a very high boy soprano voice, he stood up there and conducted a Bach chorale for the chorus. I thought it was just wonderful.

Rowell: At that time we were planning our own Christmas program at the Piano Club with all the cellos. I asked Madi if I could possibly ask this boy to conduct that same chorale and I would have it for the cellos--because we loved to play Bach chorales, those four voices on cello just sound gorgeous, right where Bach wrote them. She said, "Of course." So I asked Jeff and, yes, he would come.

In those days we had rehearsals for about three Saturdays, at least, before the program. I took the Piano Club over. They came in the morning. They brought bag lunches and we sat around all day rehearsing everything we were going to do. It had to be absolutely perfect because they weren't all advanced. I took all the cellos. I didn't eliminate anybody. I remember one old man in his eighties who I was teaching. He didn't always play beautifully, but I could arrange those Bach chorales so that they played simple parts with lots of open strings in the lovely bass and filled in beautifully without ever playing a note out of tune.

Riess: These were all recitals of your students?

Rowell: Yes. We always got together at Christmastime and gave a big recital. They didn't all play solos. A great deal of it was ensemble. Sometimes they would be wonderful Christmas carols that nobody ever heard, in three and four parts, and that type of thing. Everybody worked up things for this. That's why they had to practice down there at the Piano Club.

Jeff came over that first Saturday and rehearsed his Bach chorale with them, and then sat in a corner, and sat all day in that corner. He did that same thing each week before the program. He became so enamored of the cello, which he did not know until that time, that he begged to take lessons. So, that was the beginning. His mother brought him over at the first. Then very early he began coming in by himself, carrying that cello, and I would meet him. Finally I had a studio down in Berkeley itself rather than up here on the hill.

Riess: What was the address?

Rowell: It was on Walnut Street.

Anyway, I enjoyed him tremendously and he did progress very, very fast. Believe you me, he had to know his positions absolutely. Everything was right there, strong, so that by the end of the year he was playing very well. I put him in a little trio that first year after he started, with Don Weilerstein as violin and Jerome Rose as pianist.

Rowell: (Jerome Rose--the last I heard of him, he was concertizing in Italy. He became quite a famous pianist. Don Weilerstein is now the first violinist of the Cleveland Quartet and is playing all over the world. They're booked at least two years and a half in advance.)

The three of them gave a little concert together at the end of the year. All that Jeff played he played very beautifully. His solos were the three little Hindemith pieces, not hard at all, but he played them beautifully. They played a Haydn trio and other things; they had their own little program. Also, I think, they played on the Christmas program as a trio. That was the start for Jeff.

He went ahead very fast. He went to Juilliard and I think he was the first cellist in the Juilliard orchestra all the way through. Don Weilerstein was the concert master. So they went right from here to that. Then they formed a quartet, which was the Juilliard Quartet--young--with Donny and Jeff.

Don went ahead with his own, and Jeff became quite a soloist. Now he has for years had his own school in Ithaca, New York. He must have twenty to thirty students who are doing excellently. He takes them on to really be what I would call professionals. In his summer school, which he runs for a number of weeks, they practice something like six to eight hours. He has them practicing behind closed doors and they don't know when he is listening and when he isn't. Every evening they gather together and he tells each one what he noticed that they could improve on. They didn't know when he was listening, you see. [laughter]

He really works them. He really and truly works them. But they go there and they enjoy, and they go ahead very, very fast.

The Video-Taping, and Sophie Pao

Rowell: I will have to tell you about one of his students. Her name is Sophie Pao. She is Chinese. I think she was six years old when she was in the video tape that they took of me at San Francisco State College. It's an excellent video tape. Renie Sharp arranged for it. I've told you about it some, I think. About three days before doing it I found out that if they stopped once during the whole filming of it they said they'd have to throw it out. They couldn't do it again. So I couldn't stop one second from the time I began on those forty minutes.

Rowell: I said, "What about notes?"

They said, "You shouldn't have any notes."

So I said, "Could I make notes for the floor?"

I was sitting up until midnight the night before, getting ready, until I could not talk, I couldn't say a word, nothing came out of my mouth I was so exhausted. My tongue got all twisted up. But I would take great big bags and tear them open, and have those brown paper sheets with notes on the floor so I could look at them for help.

Riess: You needed notes for that situation?

Rowell: Oh, absolutely! For forty solid minutes of what you were going to say?

Riess: I thought it was a sample teaching situation.

Rowell: No. This was basic principles of teaching. I had to have everything down. I had three people to illustrate. I had Sophie Pao for the very little one, to illustrate the very beginnings of teaching. Then I had Emanuel Vacakis, whom I haven't mentioned yet.

Emanuel Vacakis I started at nine years old. He's a very quiet, withdrawn boy, but he came out really remarkably. He played the Dvořák concerto with the Oakland Youth Symphony beautifully, and then again with the Holy Names Orchestra. He was in high school at the time he was doing this. Then I had Carol Morrow, of whom I will have to talk about more.

Sophie Pao did a beautiful job. She's moved East and gone from Renie, who was her teacher at that time, to Jeff. I get letters at least twice a year from her and she always signs herself, "your grandstudent," because Renie used to be a student of mine. "My dear grandteacher." [laughter]

Carol Morrow

Rowell: Carol Morrow, I started with her when she was, I think, almost twelve. Bonnie was going around to the public schools playing, thinking she would interest people in cello. Carol was one of the few. Bonnie taught her during the summer and then passed her on to me.

Rowell: Carol is black and comes from a lovely family. Her mother told me, "Now, don't be surprised, Mrs. Rowell, if you find Carol almost antagonistic to you at the beginning. It takes her about two or three months to warm up to anybody." I was glad she told me that. I would call Carol withdrawn, perhaps, at that time but not antagonistic in any way.

From the very first, Carol and I got along together. She began at that young age getting the quality that I wanted. She didn't play difficult things right then, but it was the quality and the inner sense that I felt. When I had my students here--she was always a part of the group that came here--she was withdrawn from them at first. When she was in school I found out that her classmates thought that she was haughty. It was not haughtiness. It was her self-protection of herself.

I really honestly think--I don't think she would mind my saying this at all because I'm sure we love each other and know each other well enough--she didn't know whether she was black or white, or which to consider herself, because her family lived in a lovely neighborhood, her mother teaches school. I think Carol had a very hard time finding herself.

I can't tell you what delight she is to me. She walked up my front sidewalk this summer and it was as if she were a model. She was dressed exactly right, so completely simply, but elegantly. I said, "Carol, how could you ever find anything so elegant?" And she said, "Oh, my mother made it." She makes many of her own clothes, which are beautiful, dressing in a great simplicity.

When it came time to send her away she went back to different places to try out. She went to Curtis, where you get everything paid for you; you get your instrument supplied and all your music and everything, and no expense for the four years. Then Juilliard, where you have to pay, though you may get a scholarship. Then she went to Eastman and tried out there.

All three places wanted her, most decidedly. Curtis had only one opening for the coming year and they were very happy to refuse all their other sixty applicants and give it to her. But she didn't want Curtis. She wanted Juilliard. She insisted on New York. We all thought Philadelphia would be lovely for her, but she wanted New York and she wanted Mr. Shapiro, whom she'd met before.

I've never met Mr. Shapiro. From what I get from other people, he smokes a great big cigar through the lessons and is always partaking of alcohol also. A real he-man that most people are scared of. But she got along with him; she wanted him and she has had nobody else for the whole four years.

Rowell: She had played the Elgar concerto with the Youth Symphony here before she left. She did it beautifully. She went down and played it with the Santa Cruz Symphony and did a beautiful job of it. When she went back there [to New York] he put her right on the Boccherini concerto. The second month there they had concerto try-outs and Juilliard gave her the first prize for concerto, in her low freshman year, on a concerto that she knew the first page of and that was just about all.

I almost died when I heard of it. I didn't know how she would get through. She was so nervous working for that thing and she had to play the final in Carnegie Hall. Her mother went back to it. She didn't do well on her first movement. She said she'd never guessed that Carnegie Hall was so big, or was it Lincoln Center? I've forgotten which hall it was. She'd never guessed it was so big until she came on the stage. She said everything just went through her, so she was nervous for the first few measures of it. But she did very well.

Imagine choosing her for their soloist her low freshman year! But it was because they all thought so highly of her playing and didn't know that she didn't know the whole concerto from beginning to end, and her teacher let her play it.

She graduated and came out here to take her fifth year with me at the conservatory, to get her master's degree. She was here about only two or three weeks when she had a call from New York. They were asking her to come back for a job that paid $600 a week, which is pretty darn good. (This was over a year ago now.)

She said, "Oh, but I'm going to give a concert here in a couple of weeks." (It wasn't one that she was being paid anything for; it was one that she was putting on herself.) She said, "I can't come," and she hung up the phone. Then she began thinking it over and she called me.

I said, "I don't know. What do you think?"

She said, "Well..." and she called back the next day and said, "I would like to consider it."

He said, "I'm sorry. We've gotten somebody else."

She said, "Oh, I'm sorry. I would have liked to come." So they called her a day or so later and said, "All right. We've fixed it for you. You can come on back." Of course cellists are just sitting around New York waiting for jobs. So they really like her.

Rowell: She has finished her master's degree at Juilliard. She did that at the same time she was taking her evening job and getting that very, very good salary, much better than I get.

I expect her to really do things, if she'll really get down. The only trouble I have with her is that at Juilliard she was still doing the same pieces over that I had given her all the time. Even for her senior thing she did the same pieces that she studied with me, rather than new ones that she studied back there, which really broke my heart. I wanted her to learn the whole repertoire. Unlike Jeff and the others who explored the whole repertoire, she did not.

San Francisco Conservatory's Ranking in Music Schools

Riess: How does the San Francisco Conservatory rank? You've mentioned Eastman and Curtis and Juilliard.

Rowell: It's coming to the fore very, very much. Of course, New York doesn't know that there's anything west of, what would you say? [laughter]

Riess: The Palisades.

Rowell: Yes, just about. So this has been very hard on it. Mr. [Milton] Salkind has been the president of the Association of Conservatories which, if I remember right, includes Juilliard and Eastman, Mannes and those. He has been the president of that for several years. I don't know whether he is this year or not. Their meetings have been held out here quite a number of times.

I think we are ranking much higher than we were. It most certainly is harder to get into than the eastern conservatories, and we give much, much harder year-end juries to our students. When I compare us with Paul Tobias, who teaches, or some of the teachers at the New England Conservatory, there's no comparison with what we demand. For the year-end jury we have to have a complete Bach suite from memory, and I mean from memory! One of my very finest students just flubbed a little bit in one movement and they wouldn't pass the whole thing--even though everything else was perfect--until that Bach was absolutely by memory. Then they have to do a complete sonata, like a Beethoven sonata or a Prokofiev or something like that, and a complete concerto totally from memory, with the cadenzas and everything. And then a virtuoso piece. They have to play all of that for a jury.

Riess: And that's to get their degree?

Rowell: No. That's every year, to go on. They can't go on from one year to the next year without doing that.

Riess: You're talking about tremendous pressure. Don't you have a lot of sympathy for people who cannot do that?

Rowell: Oh, I do. This is the first year I haven't taught at the conservatory. I'll have to say that it's the pressure I'm glad I'm out of, because I want to teach that instrument. I'm there primarily to teach them the cello as I want to and then see them develop, and there my whole concentration ends up on whether they can memorize their Bach suite, whether they can do one movement right after the other. They come over here and we have evenings while they play and play and play for each other, because it's an entirely different thing to play for yourself and friends than for a jury. When you see Stuart Canin and all those members of the symphony sitting there, looking at you and passing on you, it's terribly hard. To know that if you make a mistake that it's--it's a very hard deal.

I think that we're doing much better with it right now at the conservatory, letting down things a little bit so the students aren't quite so tense when they come in for it. And I do think it's an excellent school.

Peter Shelton, and Auditioning

Riess: What does the conservatory do for its auditioning students?

Rowell: Do you mean auditioning to get in to the conservatory?

Riess: No. To get into a major symphony orchestra once they've graduated.

Rowell: Well, I will say that we've all thought that they don't prepare their students enough for what they have to do afterwards. However, I'm not as worried. What they do know, usually, is a concerto by memory for the rest of their lives, because they've had to learn one every year, and so on.

Auditions are just fascinating. People don't understand what symphony auditions are. This is a wonderful question to ask me right now, because just a week ago yesterday Peter Shelton--oh, I didn't mention him? Peter Shelton was one of my students all through high school. Did I enjoy him! He was a great pleasure. He went on to Stanford and was with Bonnie at Stanford, even though

Rowell: he would come back to play for me when he was going to play for something. Then he came to the conservatory for his master's degree and did remarkably. It was while he was still studying at the conservatory that there came the opening in the San Francisco Symphony.

To our utter amazement, out of I don't know how many they were trying out--it's always over a hundred--Peter got to be the assistant principal of the San Francisco Symphony. Grebanier was imported from the East and is a beautiful cellist. But there was Peter, the assistant principal, not yet out of school! We just all had our fingers crossed because while he had the potential, he didn't have the experience at all, not at all.

I did worry those first few times when Grebanier had a cut here or had something there, and Peter had to jump in and take his solo parts. I really did worry. But Peter has really come through it just beautifully.

A week ago yesterday he took upon himself, for Cello Club, giving a program on how to prepare for a symphony audition. It was a masterpiece of an undertaking. It took him almost an hour and a half to go through what he had. The whole audience just sat there, taking it in. You would think that for people who weren't going to try out for a smymphony orchestra, that it might be a dull session. It was anything but! Peter had done so much preparation for that.

Usually when they have an audition for a cello opening, they advertise and people come from all over for it, over two hundred, nearer four hundred. But they decided this time, instead of having all those people come crowding in here and pay their way here, their hotels and everything else, for Peter to go across the United States and try them out.

What Peter did yesterday was to take up what does really count when he's going and trying out these different players to see whether they are equal to coming to San Francisco for their final try outs. What he gave us of what is necessary was fascinating.

He took up every degree of it, even to the personality of the player in meeting the symphony conductor or the person holding the audition. I saw somebody come up here just within the last few days and sit down at the cello, with the grimmest face, ready to show me his symphony parts. I said, "I can tell you that isn't the way to come in and sit down, with that grim face and looking down."

Rowell: You have to be cordial to that person who's going to interview you. You may not want to be, but you have to be. And you shouldn't be too cordial. He [Peter] said to meet the eyes of the person that you're going to play for and to really make contact.

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Rowell: The conductor wants you not to be buried into your music which you're reading. He wants you to be able to follow his beat, if he's going to beat for you, or anything else.

Peter also went into the actual preparation of the cello parts and so on, the whole procedure. It was done in such a beautiful way that I was just fascinated. I ran up to him afterwards and said, "Oh, Peter, you just must go around doing this."

He said, "Margaret, I've thought of writing a book, I got so excited doing this for this afternoon. I do want to go ahead with it myself." I hope that he does.

I might mention that when Peter tried out for the San Francisco Symphony he made a date with me to come up the evening before and play all those things that you have to play, just excerpts, but the very hardest excerpts. After a long night, I told him it was fine and sent him out the front door, and I was exhausted and went to bed. Well, I got up the next morning and looked on this couch and all his music was here, not with him, and he was to be first the next morning, 8 o'clock or 9 o'clock! I practically passed out. That day was a day of absolute agony for me. I couldn't get over what I had done. He was coming out of his own free will to play for me, and there it was!

When I finally got hold of him he said, "Margaret, you didn't need to worry. I knew them all by heart." [laughter]

I like to tell that because I thought that was the best preparation. He knew how to prepare, even then. So, he made it and he sent me a great big box of champagne. He really is a darling. He's not my student anymore. He's on our staff at the conservatory as a teacher now, the youngest one, in his twenties.

Ken Pinckney

Rowell: Ken Pinckney is one who studied with me in high school. He came as a very shy redheaded boy. There I had to work with the individual, because he was so shy and so held up that he never got

Rowell: through things. I never really thought of him as progressing to be a professional cellist. His father was principal of Oakland High School at that time and he came out with him. I had to work to get Ken through a phrase so that he could hold himself to do anything.

I remember he surprised me by entering a contest. Some organization was giving a prize. Two of my cello students went into it at that same time. They were playing in the same orchestra, but I had no idea that they were competitors. Ken was studying something like the Boellman variations, which I don't even teach at this time. He had about fifteen measures of it and that was as far as I'd given him. He played those first fifteen measures for his try-out and that was it, and he made it. But my other student made it also. It was a tie between them.

There were three try-outs before the end. I took him on in the same piece, so he had more for the next time. He played down to the next double bar, I guess, for the next time, and they were still tied. It came to the final. That was really something. They both tied for the final. (The other one was Jean Hornabrook--someone I'm very happy with and keep in touch with all the time.)

I think that one breakthrough did him a world of good. It gave him confidence. Learning his fifteen measures, and then his thirty measures, and then going on, gave him real confidence that he could go ahead and do something.

Riess: He sounds like he was competitive enough. In fact, you have to be competitive to be in this.

Rowell: Yes. There is a certain bit of that in there. There isn't competitiveness in chamber music, but there is in both orchestra and in solo work. That's the reason I like the chamber music so much.

But, Ken Pinckney did go ahead then to study with Bernard Greenhouse. How that happened was after he graduated from high school he came to San Francisco State, where I was teaching. While he was there, without my knowing it, he fell in love with the harpist in his Young People's Orchestra. She was Filipino.

Well, she went back to Julliard to study harp. He couldn't stand it so he went back to visit her at Christmastime. Somewhere in all my letters I'm sure I still have the letter from him, where he wrote me that he knew I could never forgive him, but he was "falling in love with Marie" and that was all there was to it. He would have to stay on. He couldn't come back to the second semester. He just couldn't do it.

Rowell: So he was sweeping out a drugstore in the evenings to get enough to pay for his keep, and every day he would go by the Mannes School. One day he walked in and asked if he could try out there. It was Bernard Greenhouse who heard him and said, "I'll take you for a student." He not only took him for a student, he took him through the four years and was just wonderful.

Bernard Greenhouse has a very quiet pose. What can I call it? It's a beautiful spirit in him. Not that competitive spirit at all. It just suited the two of them exactly. Ken developed under him, and when it came summertime Bernard Greenhouse said, "I'm going to take you up to my summer place"--I think it was Bar Harbor or one of those places--"and show you what we do in the summertime," which was to take a hammer and nails and build something. He also took him boating and taught him all sorts of stuff, making a he-man out of him as well as overseeing his playing, which I thought was a great thing for a teacher to do.

Ken really progressed. When he graduated he was all right but he wasn't a great cellist, by any manner of means. He married Marie right away. They very soon had a child. Galen and I went one summer and visited. We arrived in New York at Grand Central Station. [Ken] said, "I'll meet you." Here he was in a little seersucker suit, and he walked us for miles to his home. He was still saving every single penny.

He took me to their apartment, which they call a railroad train apartment, something of the kind, as narrow, almost, as a railroad car. You come into the little living room, the next is the dining room, the next is the kitchen, and the last one is the bathroom, with the toilet sitting right at the top. As you come in that's the thing you see sitting up there if they haven't closed the door, which was what I saw.

They wanted to play immediately for me. They couldn't get the harp and the cello in the same room. [laughter] So he had to sit practically in the next room. They played the Schubert Arpeggione Sonata, which I've already told you was so difficult. She played the harp for him. It was beautiful. At the end of it Ken looked up at me and said, "Now, did that sound difficult?"

Galen, a fine musician at heart, answered immediately, "Oh, yes, very difficult."

Ken just collapsed. He said, "Oh, and Mr. Greenhouse said it should sound so simple!" Of course, that's the beauty of Schubert, that it is so hard and yet it must sound effortless.

Rowell: I think they had four children. She was the harpist for the St. Louis Symphony, right on graduation, and he was the very back cellist, back of either ten or twelve cellos. In no time he was up a little bit farther, a little bit farther, and before I knew it he was the assistant principal there.

First he sat at the second stand. When he was at the second stand the first stand was Leslie Parnas, who since then has become one of the leading cellists of all the country and got the Tschaikovsky Award. I was surprised in reading that. He is one of our great, great cellists. Ken said he learned an awful lot by sitting right behind him all that time. When Parnas left, then, Ken moved up to assistant principal. They made him principal for a couple of years and he begged not to be. I don't blame him. If you're sitting first you have a terrific pressure on you. He asked to remain assistant principal, which I think he still is.

Sally Kell

Rowell: I think I maybe should take up Sally Kell, who was the first cellist of the Oakland Symphony for a long time, and an extraordinary musician. She was a total musician, in that she had the kind of ear that heard so very, very clearly and quickly. I didn't know it at the time I took her, of course, but she also made a good conductor because she did hear so well and had such a marvelous sense of rhythm.

Jim Lieberman, one of my other students, thought an awful lot of her and insisted on bringing her up to me after she'd been a summer at the Santa Barbara Academy of Music. I think she was sixteen. She looked like a little mite of a girl, playing on a small cello. I was teaching at Mills College. There had been a scholarship that had never been given to anybody, the Luther Marchant Scholarship, and I offered it to her. She came on up and studied those four years with me at Mills College.

I got to know her very well during that time. Everybody saw in her this very competent, extremely talented person who could do many things. She wrote very well and before she was through she was assistant to the president of Mills College for writing things, for doing all sorts of things for the college. While she was always very musical, she never attained the quality, in any respect, that I wanted from the instrument. She could play the whole instrument so easily and read everything so quickly, and had all of that, yet I never could get her, in her whole life, to get the quality that I wanted out of that instrument.

Rowell: But she could sit down and hold that first chair in the Oakland Symphony, which she did for years, and every conductor wanted her right under their baton, because she could read anything at sight and follow them just like that, and was so dependable she was a joy to have around. She was a poet, a writer, she was everything.

She soon found out, as with Rostropovich and with others, that her gift was hearing whole, hearing the whole thing. She had a wonderful knack at conducting. She was the assistant conductor of the Oakland Symphony for quite a while. Then she led her own orchestra. Then she was in charge of the Junior Bach Festival. It was wonderful to see her grow.

I knew her father and mother from Phoenix, Arizona, and her sister. Her father and mother were both killed in that perfectly horrible airplane accident on Tenerife in the Canary Islands. I was trying to be with Sally at that time, because the word came through first about the accident and we didn't know whether they were on it or not. But, of course, they were. Sally took it wonderfully. She had to play something the very next day and she went and played it anyway. Of course, it made a terrific impact on her.

Her mother had been a very fine musician, a flute player. She came to me when I was teaching Sally at Mills and said, "Margaret, I want you to promise me one thing, please, that you'll never make a professional musician out of Sally." That's really something to try to promise a mother! Of course, I couldn't. It just wasn't in the cards to prevent it.

The mother was a professional musician. She had been a free lancer on flute in Los Angeles. When you're free lancing and running from one place to another, you are not happy. People think that musicians just love to run around playing this little job and that little job. No. That isn't really [easy]. It's a part of music that I just hate. I think it's one reason why I'm awfully happy when my students have another way of earning their living, and then play just loads and loads of fine music and keep up their instrument, and are really beautiful at it and can play every Beethoven quartet under the sun. I'm not after whether they have all the glory of it. I'm after whether their lives are really satisfactory to them. I think that's so much more important.

So, that's Sally. Of course, we all know that she met her end, finally, by taking her own life, which nobody could understand. I think I more or less understand it. I knew how she put on this appearance of being the happiest kid in college you could ever

Rowell: [imagine], this great big smile and bravado for everything. But underneath--when we took a trip down south and so on--I knew she wasn't a happy person. I was shocked, but not as surprised as other people.

Riess: You said she started her own group?

Rowell: Yes. It's one of the orchestras that is still going.

Riess: I was trying to think of those names, because there have been a number. When you refer to the Oakland Youth Symphony Orchestra?

Rowell: That is the Youth Symphony, which is an offshoot of the Oakland Symphony. It really belongs to the Bay Area, not just to Oakland. It may be sometimes called the Oakland Youth Symphony, because it belongs to the Oakland Symphony, but it includes people from all over.

Riess: So when you refer to people soloing with the Youth Symphony, that's the group you mean?

Rowell: That's it. Dr. [Denis] de Coteau has been the conductor of it as long as I can remember, and such a conductor! They've been to Europe several times. They first went to Europe so sure that they were going to get the first prize against all the other ones, and of course they didn't. [laughter] It was a great disappointment. He took, at that time, his chamber orchestra, not a full orchestra. There he was competing with the one from the Soviet Union, which had of course practiced and practiced, and the one from Helsinki, Finland.

I had a student--I hear from him all the time, he sends me records--who is now the assistant principal of the Helsinki Symphony. He was going to high school here at that time. He studied with me. His orchestra was in the competition. He's the one who told the Oakland Symphony people, "Look, we're all going to a conservatory as well as playing in the Helsinki Symphony. We get paid for everything--lesson, symphony." He said, "We're not in high school anymore. We're all on the conservatory and we're all playing in the Helsinki Symphony, but we call this the Youth Orchestra so that we could come and try out."

So the Oakland group knew what they had to try out against, and they went the next time and really and truly made it. They got the first place! Peter Shelton and Carol Morrow were the two who soloed at that time. I remember Peter being so nervous over playing, but he did beautifully.

Rowell: That orchestra is a marvelous orchestra for really training them, grilling them, for what they have to do later on, meeting the challenges.

Riess: Over the years, have there been some very distinguished high school orchestras?

Rowell: Of course there was the Berkeley Young People's Symphony. It's still going. Jessica Marcelli--she's quite a name to go with Berkeley history--was the conductor. I have a picture of the orchestra, with Bonnie sitting in the last seat. That's the orchestra she soloed with at thirteen.

Riess: When was that, fifties or sixties?

Rowell: Dates don't mean anything.

They are the orchestra that opened the Berkeley Community Theater. It was an excellent orchestra! You paid to belong to it, and the parents did a great deal for it. Jessica Marcelli was really an inspired conductor. A fine woman. She looked beautiful as she stood there and conducted. That was a marvelous thing in Berkeley history.

Riess: In that group or in the Oakland Youth Symphony, is it always oriented towards competing on an international scale?

Rowell: No. I think that that first time that the Oakland group went to Europe was the first time I'd ever heard of that type of a competition, for orchestras.

There were no competitions for anything when I was studying. I remember people trying out for the Rostropovich Master Class saying to Zara Nelsova and myself, "How do you try out for auditions?" Zara and I looked at each other and said, "Well, we've never tried out for an audition in our lives. We were always asked to play in it." I never had to try out for it. You didn't have all of that competition. It's a later thing, a very much later thing.

Riess: Have you been associated with the Berkeley Symphony Orchestra?

Rowell: Well, yes, I have been. You mean as it exists today?

Riess: Yes.

Rowell: It's quite a new group. I've tried to help them from time to time, rather strongly. I'm very interested in them. I have students in it. I think it's a wonderful young group, and I think they're

Rowell: doing just marvelously. They brought Messiaen over last year, and I thought that was just one of the most thrilling occasions there ever could be.

There are many orchestras now in the Bay Area. And all seem to be able to exist.

Joel Cohen, Becky Rust

Rowell: Now I might just go on to Joel Cohen, who is now the first cellist of the Oakland Symphony. He first took from Renie Sharp, before he came to me. He is one who has the sense of quality, very much, and he knows just what he wants out of the cello. Nobody else can tell him. You don't have to teach him style. You don't have to teach him anything. But you have to be sure that he comes through with what he has, because he would be the first one to know that he wants more than he is able to give. That is, he never used to put on that very last finishing touch.

When he was in high school he did the whole D-Major Bach Suite, which I think is the hardest one to memorize and the hardest one to do, without a doubt. But he did it so beautifully for the Bach Junior Festival, absolutely perfectly, and it sounded just gorgeous, except that in the middle of the fast movement he forgot which string he was on and went to the wrong string for several measures. It was a little bit of an imperfection, that's all. It didn't bother me that much. But there is always in his playing, has been, that little bit of imperfection.

He has always been searching for the perfect teacher. I'm almost like, I wouldn't say a mother figure, but something else that you run back to. He always comes back and plays. He commuted weekly from Santa Cruz, taking lessons while he was going to the University of California Santa Cruz. He'd come up and take a lesson and go back in a day.

I always knew that he wanted to go on to something else that was inside him, because he is the artist type. So he would go to Europe and try out this person and that person. "Nope. No good." Or else be turned down. He was turned down by one. He couldn't believe it! But it wasn't the right teacher for him anyway. I think he will be going sometime back to the one in Helsinki, which he thinks is beautiful and does gorgeous recordings.

Rowell: He has gotten a great deal out of just playing and playing, and trying to play to suit himself. There isn't anything he can't play. I think he's a very fine musician. He'll find himself. He's still finding himself. It's an excellent way.

He knows he has a lazy streak in him. I don't think that being able to practice hours a day is the answer at all. I would rather see this lazy streak that comes over you, almost a poetic streak in you that loves to loll and dream.

Riess: Have any of your students ever become involved in eastern meditation and then become better players for it, because of that concentration?

Rowell: Oh, yes. I don't know whether he does that or not. Bonnie does, and I'm sure many of my students do. I believe in it so whole heartedly. If it isn't eastern meditation, at least meditation. I don't care what form it takes. But I think it's a very important element. I don't think there's enough of it in the life of the youth today. I think the older people are catching on to it very quickly and using it. But the younger people hardly get time for it.

I'd like to take up Becky Rust. She started with a student of mine, Phyllis Miller, when she was about eight. I used to hear her and think, "She plays nicely in that first position and plays those little Otis songs nicely," but I didn't think much about her until she came to me for lessons. We've had years together. I can't tell you what it has meant to me.

I'm going to jump ahead to the climax, and I may go on with it next time. She searched out for different teachers and did not find anybody. When she came this week to me here I said, "Surely you've been taking from somebody in these last four years."

She said, "Oh, I've been taking from Margaret Rowell."

I said, "What do you mean?" I did see her two years ago. She flew down from Germany, where she's playing all the time, to the hotel in Switzerland where I was and spent a couple of days with me. I worked with her there. But I haven't seen her since until just this week.

She plays gorgeously, technically secure, musically, with a deep musical sincerity which is amazing. She is always finding new moderns to do, as well as her beloved Bach. She is kept busy with concerts in Europe. She has the use of a beautiful old cello, because of an elderly lady who attended one of her concerts in an old castle and enjoyed her playing so much. (I wish more of my students could have that luck!)

Rowell: Another thing is that she doesn't want to listen to a lot of records. She figures everything out for herself. When she came to visit this last year she was playing the Boccherini B-flat Concerto and the Haydn C-Major. I was amazed when I heard how beautifully she played them. She said she had not been listening to recordings and I don't know whether she had heard them performed. What I do know is that she gave them a very beautiful authentic performance. She truly plays movingly from "the inside out."

Chamber Music in Berkeley*

Riess: Periodically we have talked about musical groups and developments in the East Bay. One group I wanted to add was 1750 Arch Street. Has that been important?

Rowell: Yes, it was a good music center. Of course, it was closed for so long, due to the fact that it didn't meet the fire regulations. That closed it for months and months and months, and they finally opened it and could only admit I think fifty people instead of the hundred that used to come. And I think this made it so that they couldn't make enough off of it to really keep it going as a center. But while it went, it was something really remarkable, and I tried to get to as many concerts as I possibly could there.

Riess: Why was it remarkable?

Rowell: Well, it was such close quarters for it! You had a very intimate evening when you went there. They catered to very fine musicians doing it. You were right with the artists, almost on top of them while they played. I think it was sometimes hard on the artists themselves, but very fine for the people going. So you just rushed to get a ticket to go, and you very often even within a week of the time could not make reservations for it, because it was sold out so quickly. It was a wonderful thing while it went, but I think it was the fire restrictions that really stopped it more than anything else.

Riess: How about other centers that have come and gone over the years that are in any way similar to 1750 Arch? Have there been any?

Rowell: I can only think of the Julia Morgan [Center for the Arts, College Avenue] right now. I'm so glad they're using it for music, because when those wooden structures are used for music, it's always more beautiful. I love to go there.

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*[recorded October 24, 1983]

Riess: And concert series in various churches?

Rowell: Yes. The Trinity [United Methodist Church of Berkeley, Dana Street] has a wonderful concert series. Berkeley is replete with them, just rich with them, I should say. I follow them so carefully. I would rather go to those much more than to go over to San Francisco--that is, for chamber music--and sit way in the back of the hall for chamber music. For the symphony I like it.

Riess: Before Hertz Hall was built, where on campus were the concerts?

Rowell: They were all in Wheeler Hall.

Riess: Even the smallest concerts would have been in Wheeler Hall?

Rowell: Yes.

Riess: And how was that acoustically?

Rowell: I always remember it with a great deal of pleasure. The big hall that has all the offices in it had a small room where I first heard Fournier and some of those. You know where I mean--just as you come in Sather Gate, to your left hand.

Riess: Dwinelle?

Rowell: Yes, Dwinelle. They have two little halls in there, and I first heard Fournier in there. Those are smaller than Wheeler, but for chamber music they were very good.

Riess: Were there any homes in Berkeley where musical events happened?

Rowell: Of course there were string quartets always rehearsing and doing everything, but I can't remember--well, yes, Mrs. [Stanley] Hiller, who lived up on what is now Hiller Road and owned all of that, had a lovely big mansion there, and she sometimes had evenings of music. But no, really, I wouldn't say so, I'd leave that out.

Riess: Well, all I'm asking is whether in the Berkeley area there were neither homes big enough, or the atmosphere to do this?

Rowell: I would say in the Berkeley area, the whole thing with the string quartets were amateur string quartets practicing or enjoying evenings together. I never knew a richer place for string quartets to be playing. But you either played for yourselves, or else you practiced for ages and gave a concert. The two were not synonymous at all. It wasn't the same group. You were always playing string quartets, but string quartets are meant for your own pleasure and they were not written with an audience consciousness.

Rowell: I think there's a great difference between the way a composer composes for a string quartet and the way he would compose for a symphony orchestra. You take Beethoven, for instance--or Mozart or any of them--when they're composing a symphony, they usually start with something, and they will certainly end, as Beethoven did, with bang-bang-bang-bang-bang-bang--how many measures of c-major chord? [laughs]--just over and over and over again, and always this great big rumble of an end. When you're coming to an end in a string quartet, you don't have to make that. You don't have to begin or end any particular way, because you have a captive audience and an audience right around you.

In those old days string quartets were written for the home--I mean, for the drawing room situation, and not for the platform situation. You didn't have to wait for applause. It was written for the enjoyment of the players themselves, and therefore you have a much finer composition; you have a much finer insight into the music, a much better development. It's the whole development and everything else that counts, and not at all how it begins or how it ends. With a symphony, it just darn well better catch your interest from the very first note it plays, and end so that you know that you can clap, clap, clap.

MASTER CLASSES AND WORKSHOPS, UP TO THE PRESENT

[Interview 8: November 1, 1982]##

Dance, Connections and Movement

Rowell: I went to bed last night and I woke up before five this morning. I lay there absolutely aware that the earth was slowly turning and I was turning with it. I often have this experience. Do you?

Riess: No. That's wonderful!

Rowell: It's the most wonderful experience in the world. I feel absolutely at one. I lie out flat. I don't really feel it, but I almost feel as if I'm a part of something that's turning very slowly. Then I get the feeling of that movement being so darned important, and that if that earth didn't move like that, what would happen? So there I am.

Maybe this comes to me because I read what Martha Graham said in the paper yesterday. I wonder if I have it here.

[break in tape]

Rowell: [In an interview] Graham says, "I am not a style. It means rigidity and I am an object of change." (I thought that was just wonderful.) "When I stopped dancing there was a strange disassociation. I grew conscious of the space in a way I hadn't before, of the visual difference between straight and diagonal."

That gets me. Straight and diagonal. It just depends on how you use them, because they're the same thing. [continues reading] "Graham has persevered the last twenty years, still as always drawing everything in her dances from life, the burning conviction now as always that everything, in E.M. Forster's words, 'must connect.'" [Graham says] "The world is movement conscious and movement never lies, if you permit it to express something of the

Rowell: inner life.... My father, who was a doctor, told me to look to involuntary movement for truth. Society conditions us to suppress it. My quarrel is with the choreographers who use movement for no reason whatsoever. Don't watch a choreographer's movements. Watch the transitions. The animating force lies there."

I thought that was simply wonderful. I can see this in music, that it's the connections that make it. [reading] "Graham's art is not so severe as she makes it sound. She has collaborated on sets and costumes and so on for forty-four years. Her composers have included [Anton] Horst and Samuel Barber, William Schuman and Carlo Chavez, and of course Aaron Copland. 'I have always felt,' she avers, 'That dance and music must be of the same era. I always performed in the grandest of theaters. Never, never have I danced only for the adulation of the few. Remember that the original meaning of enthusiasm is the worship of the gods. I think it still applies.'"

That thing on connection and movement I thought was simply wonderful.

Pablo Casals at Berkeley

Riess: We were going to talk about the master classes, yours and others.

Rowell: The concept of the master class emerged from the great violin teachers of Europe and probably came to our country from 1950 on. Casals came twice. April 1960 was the first, and 1962 the second. I think that was the way it was.

We had had master classes before that, but it would be the great teachers who would come and explain how they taught, basically, rather than this thing of having the students play. However, I find that the great cellists of Europe have practically taught through master classes all these years. Instead of having the individual student come for a lesson, they all come in the morning together. One student takes the lesson, and another and another, and they listen to each other.

When I stop to think, that was the way I did it back when I taught at Mills College for the summers. That was just chamber music and coaching, which would be a master class situation. I had maybe ten groups in different rooms out there, big rooms, and each with a grand piano. I would coach one group and they would all be there. Then we would go to the next group. They would be practicing all day long but we would all go wherever it was happening.

Rowell: I think that the master class idea did grow, perhaps rather slowly, but it has most certainly taken this country over, and I would say Europe as well. It's such a fine way. Up to that time I would say that the teachers had their own students, but nobody else ever saw that particular teacher teach. He might have taught his own students together, but there was nobody else seeing him. That would be the difference.

Riess: At the master class the audience is often teachers watching the master teach?

Rowell: It's students, too. Anner Bijlsma, a very fine Baroque cellist, is coming this week to Stanford. We'll all be flocking down there. He'll be giving a master class in the afternoon and then playing in the evening.

Riess: Tell me about getting Casals to come here. I've always said that you paved the way, but I'm not exactly sure that that's true.

Rowell: Oh, no! It was Bonnie Hampton who really paved the way for his coming, entirely. Colin Hampton, also, but in a much less way. Bonnie had been studying with him before that time and without a doubt she brought him.

However, Casals had a wonderful memory, always, of California. If you've read anything about him you know about the year he came and took that trip up Tamalpais.

Riess: Yes. Nineteen hundred and one he climbed Mount Tam. That was also when the boulder smashed his finger.

Rowell: Yes. It's very interesting to know more about that. The woman with whom he stayed in San Francisco at that time was a friend of his and I sat next to her at a dinner. She told me so much about him. It was very interesting. How insecure he was at that time and how he didn't think he would ever go on with cello playing. He wasn't sure he wanted to.

You know what he said when he injured his finger? "Thank God I'll never have to play the cello again!" I think that's one of the most wonderful exclamations. I can understand that so perfectly. We get so wrapped up in it; we wish we could live our own lives, and we feel that the cello is living our life for us!

I think her father was the doctor for Casals and that he lived three or four months with them at that time, in great depression. She couldn't pull him out of it. She kept in touch with him after that and used to fly down to Puerto Rico every summer to hear him down there.

Rowell: But I most certainly had nothing whatsoever to do with bringing Casals here. The Cello Club had thought that they would, but it was very apparent that Cello Club did not have the means. We were not structured to do anything like that. So we got the Extension Department of the University of California to take it on, which they did in a very wonderful way. I just saw Estelle Caen this past week. She was the one who was in charge of it for the university. We thought back to those times.

Riess: They took care of the enrolling and of the financial aspects?

Rowell: And they made a heck of a lot of money off of it, because everybody came from all over the United States for that. That was a very big one.

Riess: If everybody was coming from all over, you had an enriched contact with the whole cello world?

Rowell: Yes, of course. There the cello teachers did come from the different universities. The players came from all over, too, though most of them were our Berkeley players.

Riess: Did this affect the cello section of the San Francisco Symphony? Did it have that kind of result?

Rowell: No. I think the San Francisco Symphony probably paid little attention to it. It was in their own backyard: Berkeley is surely the backyard of San Francisco, not the parlor. It was the people from Los Angeles, and the Los Angeles Symphony, more the solo players from all over the United States that came.

I remember the teachers. One was from Kansas and I thought, "Kansas?" But he brought a student with him, who was in the class, and I found out afterwards what a remarkable cello teacher he was and how many fine students he had had all through his life. There were many like that, who came and stayed the whole two weeks.

It was a month, I guess, the first time. There were twelve cellists, as I remember. I think almost half of the total were either mine or had studied with me, like Bonnie Hampton.

It was terribly hard! I never knew what they were going to have to play the next day. It was put up on a sheet one day what we were going to play the next. I had to work from day to day with them on what they were going to play. It was awfully hard on me. Terribly hard. I was worn out. I think that this was as bad the second time. He came for two weeks, the second time, and a month the first time. It was spread out.

Riess: So the system would be that you would coach them like mad the day before?

Rowell: [chuckles] Oh, yes! It was mad. It was really hectic for me.

I didn't know which students were going to get in. I didn't push them. A couple of students got in who I really thought shouldn't be in, who weren't that well prepared.

Riess: Who auditioned them for the master class?

Rowell: Colin Hampton did it mainly. I think Colin and Bonnie did it mainly.

Riess: There was Pablo Casals with Margaret Rowell's students. Did you have some contact with him?

Rowell: I had very little contact with Casals. I didn't want to have it because, as I say, he was somebody that I worshiped in the distance. Cello Club had a dinner for him. I remember that. He stayed at the Durant Hotel. Everybody else saw him and crowded around him. I was so busy with all the other things. I didn't feel as if I was in any way in charge of it or doing anything for it. I was so busy getting my students ready to play for him. Other times that some people have come, such as Rostropovich, it was much different.

The Rostropovich Party

Riess: Let's talk about the Rostropovich visit, as a kind of contrast.

Rowell: Well, we couldn't tell when he was going to come. He came first on about two days notice. Rostropovich never writes a letter. He says he never does. I have one thing that he wrote out, in my safe, where he says, "Yes. I will come. I will spend the whole evening. You can do anything with me you want." [laughter] With that and just a couple days notice we got over a hundred of the Cello Club members there, with their cellos.

They gave us the Men's Faculty Club for the evening and we arranged a big dinner, which we brought ourselves. Each one of us cooked our very fanciest dish for him, because we knew that Rostropovich was a great connoisseur of wonderful food, loved to eat and have whatever else went with it. Terry Sharp, Irene's husband, took charge when Rostropovich arrived. We showed him this

Rowell: whole long table of all of these delicacies and he went down and said, "Is there any egg or any milk in any of those things?" He couldn't eat anything with eggs or milk, and here were all these fabulous things for him! It was Russian Easter, and he is an absolute orthodox and of all those wonderful things that we had there were only a few he could have. That fabulous food!

While that was going on in The Faculty Club, in Hertz Hall the kids were all coming. Nobody had known about it before and while we were eating they were rehearsing with Dr. de Coteau, who is one of our wonderful symphony conductors. Only about a hundred could get on that stage in Hertz Hall. There were about twenty-five or thirty left with their cellos and cello cases who couldn't even get on the platform. In the time while we were eating he had those people in the most beautiful order you ever saw, and those hundred cellos played for Rostropovich magnificently.

One of Renie's little tiny girls, whose legs couldn't possibly reach the floor, was the concert mistress of this. She sat on the first chair and played like a dream. Rostropovich just couldn't take his eyes off her. He went up and kissed her.

We had the people from the conservatory there, too. Then a group played the Villa Lobos for eight cellos. Wonderful music. Rostropovich jumped up and grabbed Bonnie's cello and played the solo part. We had loads of fun.

Then he reached his arms out to the fullest and said, "I come give you a master class." That was what he wanted to do.

Mstislav Rostropovich at Berkeley

Rowell: However we once again felt, after having been through Casals, that we shouldn't handle it, that we should let the university handle it. That became very hard because he couldn't tell when he was going to be able to come. It was going to be when he was here conducting opera for San Francisco. So we didn't know until a very short time ahead, what days he would have free. We had to try people out very quickly and get the thing ready.

It went well. We didn't have anywhere near as big a crowd for that as for Casals because we didn't have the notice to get the people from a distance here.

Riess: Was Rostropovich at that time already the conductor of the National Symphony?

Rowell: No. What he was doing was conducting his opera that he did in Russia, the one that's very seldom done because it takes so much rehearsal time and overtime. He had done it in Russia many times and wanted to do it here. The musicians themselves actually gave him overtime; they got the union to say that they could. You have to get it down to the last dotted sixteenth for him! He'll keep them until two or three o'clock in the morning. He was so tired doing that that that was the reason he didn't know when he could come over to us.

He always has been wonderful to us here. Everytime he would jump off the plane he would come and do everything possible for us. Have I told about the first time?

Riess: No.

Rowell: Oh, all right. Well, the first time he came I don't think he was quite thirty years old. It was very early. He was playing the Prokofiev in San Francisco. Not the copy we have now, at all. It was still in manuscript. We arranged to have him come to Cello Club afterwards. It was not the present San Francisco Conservatory; it was still in two old buildings down on Sacramento Street. Sally Kell was our president at that time. So we arranged for Sally Kell to bring him.

It happened to rain cats and dogs that day. We didn't realize that Sally had one of the old cars with only those black things that you had to button on in times of rain, and it was just a two-seater and she had to carry his cello and him out in it to this old place.

They arrived and I was in the other building, trying to get hot coffee and things ready. Bonnie had a group in the main building to play for him. (We always had cellos playing for him when he came in.) He came in with his interpreter. He didn't speak any English at that time. They were playing away for him. Then, in a little while I heard somebody playing the piano and I thought, "If that isn't the most awful thing! Why is somebody at the conservatory sitting down and playing the piano when we have Rostropovich here! Of all times, this is perfectly terrible!" So I dashed over from one building to the other to see what was happening, and there was Rostropovich sitting at the piano, playing away for all he was worth. We hadn't realized at that time what a magnificent pianist he is also.

Rowell: It was really a remarkable evening because it did have such informality to it, as we always do have. We had several people who were Russian there, because we didn't know he would have his own interpreter, so he had people speaking Russian to him that whole evening. I found someone left absolutely alone who had come with him and didn't seem to know anybody, so I started talking to him over in a corner, trying to find out who he was and what he was doing there. Not until the last did I finally find out, when he gave me his card, that he was in charge of all cultural affairs for the whole Soviet Union. This was Rostropovich's first trip out of Russia, so he was traveling with him every place, as well as his interpreter.

Riess: About when do you think that was? I know you don't like years and dates.

Rowell: [laughter] You know, at this moment I should be able to tell you. If you remind me, I know that I can look back in my date books and tell you just what it is. But it was either '58 or '59.

The 1959 Casals International, at Xalapa

Rowell: Have I told about going to Mexico? It was just about that same time. The Casals International was really something. It had met in Paris before and it was to meet in Mexico. Of course, everybody thought it would meet in Mexico City, but they found out that Casals had such a bad heart that he shouldn't be above five thousand feet. (Mexico City is between seven thousand and eight thousand, I believe.) So they put this Casals International into the town of Xalapa, between Vera Cruz, on the sea coast, and Mexico City, right in the mountains. A beautiful little old, old Mexican city.

Bonnie Hampton was going down to play for that. This was before our master class up here. There were about nineteen performers from all different countries. The judges were people like Villa Lobos and Rostropovich, Zara Nelsova, Sadlo from Czechoslovakia.

Riess: It was a competition?

Rowell: Very definitely, with each country sending one person to it. France, England, Russia, Czechoslovakia, Sweden, Finland.

Riess: And Bonnie for America?

Rowell: Yes. I'll get them all for you. There were nineteen contestants.

I'll never forget the first day of that. It was in a school building with a very narrow auditorium and a very, very high stage. Down in front were the eight high handcarved chairs--by high I mean they came way up above a person's head--where the eight judges sat in a semicircle.

Those nineteen performers had to come out and the thing they had to start with was the unaccompanied sixth Bach suite. That is the hardest suite to play, and the most technical suite. Each of those nineteen people had to come out and play that first movement of it alone, before they played anything else. I felt for each one of them. Some played it very beautifully, and some of them did not play it quite so well. Some of them survived that particular round, and then there was another round.

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Riess: Rostropovich was down there?

Rowell: Yes. He was one of the judges. Zara Nelsova was one of the other judges. Of course Zara, I knew well before that. Her sister lived in Berkeley.

The judges stayed in a very fancy, beautiful old Spanish home and had everything served to them. We just stayed wherever we could find a place in town. I would hear from Zara different stories. "Oh, what do you think happened last night? Somebody knocked on my door and I went and there was nothing there except a sheet with a great big poinsettia on top of it. Then it began moving." Of course, it was Rostropovich underneath the sheet! [laughter] He was always pulling tricks on everybody. The judges were having the most marvelous time together, having all their meals served to them in style and yet having all this.

The Judges, Judged

Rowell: After it was over these nine great cellists were to each give an individual concert in the great Bellas Artes Theater of Mexico City, where each name was emblazoned in front of the theater in lights, ten feet high. Each one had to give a concert.

Now the tables were turned on them. While they'd been having a wonderful time judging the others, now they were all nine to judge each other. This was really hard because very seldom

Rowell: is an artist ever where he hears another one, and most certainly no one cellist ever has to play for eight other artists as great as he is and have them right in the front row.

The funniest thing of all happened between Rostropovich and Milos Sadlo from Czechoslovakia. Sadlo had brought his very best student, who happened to win the first prize. I don't think it was related, because he was the only teacher there who did have his student with him at all times. Rostropovich and Sadlo were outstanding artists. Rostropovich was just gaining his greatest recognition, but very few people knew that he was playing with David Oistrakh, the greatest violinist of that era, a Russian. Sadlo was playing with the same one. I have trio records by both of them with Oistrakh. So there was that competition between the two of them.

It shows how unsure even Rostropovich was in that era, that they both thought they had to try their programs out before they played in the great big Mexican theater. So, Sadlo arranged to go to the town of Monterrey which was, I would say, a thousand miles away, flying and give his concert there. Rostropovich arranged to go to, oh, the one where everybody goes, where they do all the art work.

Riess: Guadalajara?

Rowell: Guadalajara, I guess. I think that was it. Of course, those were diametrically opposed places. In fact, they were giving them on the same evening.

The next morning, Sadlo was there for breakfast and came over to speak to Zara and myself, and said, "I came in last night after my concert. But my pianist wanted to stay until this morning, and the airport is fogged in." [laughter] We both said, "That's all right. It will be cleared up by noon and you will be all right."

At noon he came, shakingly, and said, "It has not cleared up yet." Zara said, "You better get ready right away and see who in town has the music." "Oh, his accompanist had the music with him."

Well, he found an accompanist somewhere. Where he found the music, I don't know. But he had to come out and give that concert without his own pianist. I don't know exactly what the original program was. He played some of the same things. He played the A-Major Beethoven, but he played it completely from memory and forgot it in several places. He played Kol Nidre; I think he even forgot some of that. I can't remember what all else he played. He played very beautifully but, of course, he didn't play to suit himself at all.

Rowell: The review was not very complimentary. It came out very early in the morning. I was one of the first ones down and saw him the next morning just before he left. He flew out before anybody saw him.

Riess: Devastated.

Rowell: Yes. Put that down just a second. [break in tape] [shows autographed photo] I knew what it meant to him to do it and I told him I had enjoyed the program. So I think that's why he wrote, ""With all my heart and remembrances of five days in Xalapa, 1959," on his picture to me.

A Story about Rostropovich at Xalapa

Rowell: Then Rostropovich had to give the concert the next night. Zara Nelsova had had a room just opposite him with a small courtyard between. She came and asked me if I would mind changing rooms with her, because she didn't like to practice there and have him hearing her all the time. [laughter] She had to give her program later. I said, no, I didn't mind at all. She moved upstairs where I was and I came down and had that room right opposite Rostropovich. Of course, I never turned my lights on when I went in, and he always practiced facing that window. So I did see him practicing and got an awful lot of seeing him at work.

It came the night for his concert and there was a knock on my door. It was Zara Nelsova. She said, "Margaret, you have to come with me. Rostropovich is just practicing and practicing away there, and he has to be going in less than half an hour. We have to get him to stop." I didn't want to go, necessarily, but we did. She banged and banged on his door until he came.

There he was. I have never seen such a sight in my life! He had more hair then than he does now and the little strands of it were hanging down over his face. He had a shirt of some kind, opened down to the waist, absolutely sopping wet, the perspiration just rolling down his face. He said, "I cannot play! I cannot play!" He held out his hands, helplessly, "I cannot play a note! I cannot play!"

Zara said, "You go and take a shower. We're calling a taxi. We will be down in the lobby in twenty minutes for you."

But he said, "I cannot play! I cannot play!" [laughter]

Rowell: We said, "No matter. You go and get a shower." So, we waited and he finally came down. I sat there at the theater in fear and trembling--somebody said, "Why did you?"--for him to come out and play. He came out and, of course, played like an angel. Every number was remarkable. So, it shows what an artist does go through behind the scenes. Isn't that marvelous?

Riess: How interesting for you. That's really a kind of different experience.

Rowell: Very, very different. I've told that to people and they can hardly believe it, because you don't see that often in a very great artist. It is that thing of having to come out and play for all your [peers]. When else do you ever find all the people you dread playing for out in the front seats in one evening?

Dr. Leo Eloesser

Riess: And the Casals Internationals, are they still going on?

Rowell: No. This was only while he was alive. I don't think they had ones after that. There had been one in Paris before that.

But people came from all over. A very lovely person, Dr. Leo Eloesser, came down with his viola from San Francisco. Did I mention him before? He was my doctor in San Francisco. I think I mentioned him helping me out, didn't I, when I was ill?

Riess: You didn't mention him by name. I would have remembered the name.

Rowell: I might just go back then to say that when I was on the air on NBC, broadcasting, I knew I was quite ill, and when they took my temperature it was over 104°. I couldn't stop. I had to play. But as soon as I could, I called Stanislaus Bem, who had always been my teacher, and he said, "I'll come right down." Mr. Bem said, "I'll send a doctor to you right away." It was Dr. Eloesser, one of the greatest surgeons in the United States, and all I had was the flu!

Little did I know how much I would have to do with him later on, because he organized the Spanish relief effort, the doctors going over there, had a couple of train-loads of doctors from the whole United States going over to Spain. All around the Bay Area we spent a long time during that Spanish Civil War giving concerts, because we all loved Dr. Eloesser and his cause. At a

Rowell: string quartet here, in my home, I fed one hundred twenty-five people dinner one evening. They were sitting on my stairs, they were sitting every place under the sun. Dr. Eloesser spoke and then the quartet played.

I remember that evening very well. Everybody crowded in and there was a very fine person there, prominent in the Berkeley Co-op, who happened to be a Communist. He didn't get inside, but he was on my front steps. The FBI were here in no time. I had no idea that I was on the FBI list for ages because of that quartet concert. [laughter] Dr. Weilerstein had to report back to Washington because he had come to the quartet concert at my home! [laughter]

It was after this, then, that Dr. Eloesser went to Xalapa. Casals had an orchestra down there in Xalapa at the time, and Dr. Eloesser played in it. He had just married, very late in life. He stayed at Xalapa for the remainder of his life living very quietly. Every morning the people who needed care would line up outside his house. They never knew how famous he was. He gave all his services from that time on, as far as I know, kept on playing his viola and just loving Xalapa.

The wife that he had married had been an anthropologist. Xalapa was filled with old things. I have my picture taken with one of those big heads beside me that they were just unearthing at that time.

Riess: Was Dr. Eloesser the doctor for musicians, particularly?

Rowell: Well, he always was for musicians up here, but he never came back again after that.

Riess: But up here?

Rowell: Oh, yes. Any musician could have him for anything. He was a very great surgeon. One of my dearest friends had had incurable tuberculosis of the spine. She had suffered so much through her life that I thought Dr. Eloesser was the only person in the world who could help her. However, he had no concept of time whatsoever. If you had a string quartet concert he was just as likely to come in at about half past eleven at night with his viola. "Oh, you've been waiting for me?" He's always looking out for his patients first.

I asked him if he would see this friend of mine sometime. I brought her up from San Jose, which was a hard thing. She stayed with me. We had a four o'clock appointment in the afternoon and I sat with her in his office until six o'clock. I had to go to

Rowell: broadcast. I came back after broadcasting and she still hadn't gotten in. But we waited until he saw her, and he was wonderful to her. Of course, he never sent a bill or anything. That was no matter. He could do almost anything.

More on Rostropovich and Xalapa, 1959

Riess: Xalapa was the first time that you met Rostropovich?

Rowell: Oh no! He had been with the San Francisco Symphony before that.

Riess: And you feel that you got to know him?

Rowell: Oh, yes. Now, Rostropovich I feel I know, I won't say very well, but from the first time that Cello Club entertained him he felt [comfortable]. I think it was the very fact that we did have the Russian people to speak to him, that we were a group of young people. Usually after concerts I find it's the society ladies who entertain you. I've been to them and I can't stand them. I don't mean the society ladies, I mean that entertainment of the sweet little food to eat, the lovely napkins and plates and everything. That isn't the way we do it in Cello Club, at all. I think he liked the enthusiasm and the young people, along with the professional players, that we always have the whole gamut of it.

So every time he came here he asked to be met by us. We would meet him at the airport and somebody would take him wherever he was going, whether it was San Francisco or this side of the bay. I can remember meeting him once at the San Francisco Airport. He was going to stay at the Hotel Claremont. Just as we were approaching the Hotel Claremont, there was my son Galen on a rope coming down the front tower of the hotel! It couldn't have been timed better. I was just shocked! It happened to be a carnival with artificial snow outside and everything else.

Rostropovich wasn't at all impressed by him. He said, "I don't want to stay here. I want to go to your house." So we came right up here. He was used to coming here by that time. He practiced and practiced away with his pianist. I guess we'd picked up the pianist, too. When he got through he shoved his cello under the piano and said, "I'll be back tomorrow." [laughter] So he trusted me with his cello all night, which I thought was quite a trust.

Riess: He didn't stay in your house though? He went back to the hotel?

Rowell: Oh, yes. We didn't have any room for him. He did go to one of my student's homes to rehearse, because I had to teach. The student took quite a number of pictures of him, which I have.

Riess: Was there any consideration of him becoming the conductor of the San Francisco Symphony?

Rowell: I never heard of it.

Riess: The National Symphony got him.

Rowell: He loves to conduct. I can understand this completely. He without doubt was the greatest cellist who ever [lived], he and Casals. He adored Casals.

It was loads of fun to see Casals conduct the eight cellists. Wait just a minute, because I can find the program.

[break in tape]

Riess: These are the seven judges that went on to perform at the Bellas Artes. [looking at program]

Rowell: Casals was the eighth. They were the judges in Xalapa.

André Navarra is still considered perhaps the outstanding cello teacher of all Europe. Somebody just asked me this last week if he was still that. Milos Sadlo, from Czechoslovakia, is one of the greatest teachers of all times. He did teach the one who got the first prize there [in Xalapa].

Zara Nelsova is very well known in this country, perhaps the greatest woman cellist of today, I would say, without a doubt. And there is Mstislav Rostropovich--however you pronounce that.

Gaspar Cassado is a very fine Spanish cellist and has done a very great deal for the cello. Maurice Eisenberg is very, very well known. He is no longer living, but he was Casals' "right hand" and founded and carried on the International Cello Society of London after Casals' death. Anyway, I was delighted when Mr. Eisenberg said, "Don't you want to hear me play Bach?" and took me up to his little room where he played the whole fifth suite for me.

Riess: And then there's Adolfo Odnoposoff.

Rowell: Oh, yes. He was from Mexico itself and he was very well known, he and his brother both, but he as a cellist. [sorting through various papers] Here the contestants are, ah ha! This is wonderful. Oh, [squeally laugh] you should see Bonnie in this

Rowell: picture! It's so interesting to know where all these people are now! Let me just hand that program to you. You can see an awful lot happened down there, can't you?

Riess: Yes.

Rowell: Anner Bijlsma, I had forgotten that he was down there. He is internationally known and recorded. He comes to San Francisco almost every year. Gerhard Mantel was there. He flew down to see me when I was in Switzerland two years ago, from Germany. Josef Chuchro, from Czechoslovakia, is the one who finally got first prize.

Bonnie played very beautifully and was in the finals. She had to use the same pianist as Chuchro. He had come with Chuchro and his teacher, Mr. Sadlo. It was apparent to me that the pianist saw to it that his close friend won. Bonnie played beautifully. She had been studying with Pablo Casals at this time and he was very fond of her. I've never forgiven that pianist!

That trip was altogether exciting. I had never traveled so far alone before, and finding a place in Xalapa to stay was quite an experience. I finally ended up in the home of Linni de Vries, who was a professor at the Xalapa University.

Cello Club*

Riess: The Cello Club was formed when?

Rowell: We say 1950, but I think it was actually before that. It's hard for me to look back and have things correct. If you know me you know that words mean a lot to me and numbers mean almost nothing.

Riess: Let's find out why the Cello Club began.

Rowell: I would almost say the fetus of it was right in this living room that you're sitting in now, because I always had my students come together to play for each other. I thought everybody did, but they didn't; this was really rather unusual in those days, to have a teacher have her students come up and play for each other.

Riess: These were just recitals?

Rowell: Not recitals in any sense of the term. No outsiders here. The students would come up and everybody would play. I mentioned before that Bonnie and her dear friend Ellen Odhner would always

*also see Appendices

Rowell: have something cooked up. They would take the Bach double violin concerto and work it out for two cellos, not already transposed, as they sometimes do today. Just reading it off the violin parts. They would do all sorts of things for surprises for me. It was a wonderful group of people and they felt very close to each other.

Riess: Were they people of about the same ability?

Rowell: No. All different. Ability wasn't the thing that mattered. It was playing the cello that mattered. There would be maybe twelve of us here on a Sunday.

From that what happened was that Colin Hampton, who had been at the Royal Conservatory of Music [in London] where his teacher had the class get together, was used to having a group together, and I said to Colin, "Why don't we get both of our students together?" So that's what we did. So Colin is just as much in on the beginning of the real Cello Club as I am, because that's when it became not being only my students and began being his students also, and then opened to all cello players. People thought it was sort of a closed thing. After Colin and I came together with our students it was opened to any cellist anywhere to come and join.

Riess: And did that happen?

Rowell: When it happened, of course, was when we had big things like the Casals master class. At that time I think we had around three hundred members, which didn't happen other times. They had to be members to get in for tickets. Otherwise, we fluctuate up and down with our membership a great deal. But we have done so much through the years. I would say that Bonnie has been right back of it from the very beginning, even though she was such a youngster at that time.

Riess: What has it actually done other than coming together to hear each other?

Rowell: I would say it was the backbone of the Casals and Rostropovich, and other master classes.

Riess: Do they raise money for scholarships?

Rowell: Yes. We have a Cello Club competition every year and have about five different prizes.

Bonnie Hampton is now president. We are meeting every month again. I think it was last year we met every two months, which didn't seem quite right. We're having some very interesting meetings this year.

Rowell: Everybody brings their instrument at least for part of it. Sometimes we have other people. Laszlo Varga comes over and plays for us, and the visiting cellists come and play for us. We have meetings on all sorts of subjects. We have access to all the Casals films. We will be showing those I think next month, again. We show about three, in an afternoon or evening, of those master classes at Hertz Hall.

Riess: How do you raise the money to offer the prizes?

Rowell: I am actually embarrassed to ask. The biggest prize that the Cello Club gives is the Margaret Rowell Scholarship Prize and I don't know how they raise the money for it. [laughter] The person who got it this year has to come out from the New England Conservatory and I have to arrange for it.

We have them, thank goodness, arranged so that there is a money scholarship with the presentation at the Berkeley Piano Club. We put on the concert, also. That's the biggest prize. The next prize is just a money scholarship. They are not awfully huge prizes. They go down until we have them for the nine, ten and eleven-year-olds.

Riess: And the money scholarship is to be used wherever they're studying? Or is it used here?

Rowell: They are not big scholarships. It's more for the attraction of doing it than it is for the scholarship. I don't think the money that the little twelve-year-olds get would go very far toward lessons. Maybe three or four lessons and that would be it. It's really the idea of it. I've found out that it is not the amount of money in the scholarship, it's the fact that you're competing with somebody and winning a prize that really counts.

Riess: Is Cello Club San Francisco as well as East Bay?

Rowell: It has been East Bay oriented, but its membership is open to all. Some come from Sacramento and San Jose. It usually always met here, in Berkeley. But lately we've been meeting quite often at the San Francisco Conservatory because they have such wonderful facilities there for us. It varies, where we meet and what we do. We changed the name from Berkeley Cello Club to California Cello Club.

Riess: Is there more cello strength in the East Bay than there is in San Francisco?

Rowell: Yes.

Riess: Is there an equivalent group in San Francisco?

Rowell: I would say that the conservatory is beginning to come up to it. But there always have been more cellos in the East Bay. It's been noted for it. They say that this is a conglomeration of more cellos, around the bay, than almost any other place in the United States.

Riess: Why is that?

Rowell: Well, I don't know.

Riess: [accusingly] Are you responsible for that?

Rowell: [laughter] I don't think so. I think that we have gotten excited over it. Have you got one of those Robert Commanday articles someplace that says something like that? Well, I don't believe it. I think it was all of us together that really did it. I think that this just really grew. The cello has caught on every place, but I think there was a nucleus of cellos here for a long time when they did not have as much on the East Coast. But I think that the East has more than caught up with us now. All over the world the cello has caught on.

Cello Popularity

Riess: I asked you earlier why the cello was so popular. I supposed that it was because of the big personalities, like Casals. You said, no, it had to do with the instrument itself.

Rowell: I think it has to do with the instrument itself because if it were that, think of your violinists. Think of your Yehudi Menuhins and your Isaac Sterns, who also have done so much for the world as Casals did, who are such wonderful human beings as well as artists.

Riess: True. Why suddenly was the instrument popular?

Rowell: I would say first of all it is the range of the instrument. The violin can go down to the g below middle c, and that's all, and three octaves above middle c. But the cello can go clear down two octaves completely below middle c, and yet it can go as high as anybody wants to go. It can go, these days, practically as high as you want to hear on a violin. [all the preceding illustrated on piano] The violin, in all those artificial harmonics, could go higher.

Riess: Yes. That Shostakovich trio starts out very high.

Rowell: The cello is as high on that as you ever want to hear anything, extremely high. Some of those are artificial harmonics, some are not. You can get almost everything out of a cello. You get that tenor range and the contralto range and the bass range out of a cello, but you get [only] a soprano range out of a violin.

Riess: But that was always the case. Why, suddenly, was the cello discovered?

Rowell: Radio and records, I would say.

You get used to those high notes of the violin, just as you do to your Galli-Curcis and great sopranos of that day. But our speaking voices have gotten lower, much lower. Eleanor Roosevelt is a very good example of that. She had to take lesson after lesson to lower that voice so that she could speak over the air. We do not have those feminine voices. You go to another country and you hear them. It would be interesting to find out whether those are countries where they have cello as much as they do here. But we really have lowered our voices much more than we know.

In every way the cello encompasses that whole rich middle range. That's where it's at home. Now, the cello is not as good as a solo instrument with a symphony today as a violinist or a pianist, either one, because its overtones do not carry as well. But on recordings it's just as good, if not better. Recording a cello concerto with a symphony orchestra, you put that microphone in just the right place for the cello. It has the most gorgeous sound. The cello does not have to press or do anything to get its beautiful tone and be carried out on that record. If you were in Louise Davies Hall or the opera house, you would not hear that cello well enough with the symphony orchestra.

I sat on a board in San Francisco with the symphony people. You remember Alfred Frankenstein, the wonderful reviewer--at least I thought he was--for art and music in San Francisco?

Riess: Yes.

Rowell: He wanted to form a committee to get more young players and more of the oncoming great players to be soloists, rather than all the same routine of the same great artists always coming. So we held many meetings with the symphony conductor and the manager of the symphony to try to introduce that.

Rowell: They would sit on that side, the symphony manager and conductor, and say, "No, we can't have cellists. There's only one cellist who can carry and that's Rostropovich, maybe Zara Nelsova. No other cellist can we have." I know we went eight years once without a single cello soloist with the San Francisco Symphony. This was because they didn't think the cello carried out enough. So that can happen.

Riess: But can't they amplify?

Rowell: No, it's just not done. I don't know what's going to be done about it. You do sometimes amplify, when people play out of doors and such things. I've heard Zara when she was amplified. You don't enjoy it as much. If there is some amplification, they may be able to handle some of it.

Flint Hall in Cupertino is one of the finest halls to play and to be heard in that I know. I love to go down there to hear cellists. I'm very particular what hall I hear a cellist in.

Riess: Well, Hertz is fine because it's small.

Rowell: Oh, well, but that's so small. Zellerbach isn't quite so good. However, I heard Fournier there and sat up in the gallery and liked it very much.

Flying Around, 1965, 1966, 1967

Riess: In 1965, according to this list of your activities, you were appointed by the American String Teachers Association [reading] "to select music and train young cellists from fifteen states to perform at the national ASTA convention in Dallas, honoring Casals. Casals was ill and could not attend."

Rowell: Yes. But he heard it all. The Bell Telephone Company got the award that year from the American String Teachers because what they did in that instance was to connect Casals right through from Puerto Rico and had him talking to us right in the assembly hall, even though he was ill. Our whole concert was given to him in Puerto Rico, right from there. So the telephone company got the award as being the outstanding contributors. It was the same award they gave me in 1977, but they gave it to the Bell Telephone Company that year.

Margaret Avery Rowell bending to meet the needs of musicians.

Above: Teaching Chamber Music at Mills College, Oakland, California, summer 1957.

Below left: With unidentified cellist, Greensboro, North Carolina, 1982.

Below right: With cellist Paul Tortelier, 1983. *Photograph by Ritchie.*

Margaret Rowell: Early Work Shops, Master Classes and Lectures *

March, 1965: Appointed to National A.S.T.A. Cello Co. to select music and train young cellists from fifteen states to perform at National A.S.T.A. Convention in Dallas, honoring Pablo Casals. (Casals was ill and could not attend.)

June 22, to
July 9, 1966: Gave two-hour lecture-demonstation every afternoon, following Mr. Suzuki's Workshop in the morning at San Francisco State University. Prof. Haderer (violin), and myself (cello), brought Suzuki to S. F. State for the two-week workshop.

1967: Taught course for string teachers at University of Southern California Summer Session.

Lecture-demonstration at A.S.T.A. Western Conference in Las Vegas, Nevada. Eight cellists,(my students at S.F. State) performed Bach Chorals and the Villa-Lobos Bachianes No. 1 for eight cellos, and then illustrated each point of my lecture.

1968: Gave Workshop at National A.S.T.A. in Seattle. Trained four of my private students, (all 12 years old), to illustrate each of my Basic Principles and ended with their playing the First movement of the Hayden C Major Concerto in unison--including cadenza.

Later Workshops and Lectures

Feb., 1973: Western M. E. N. C.-A. S.T.A. in Tucson, Arizona

Texas A.S.T.A. (San Antonio, February 8,9,10)

March 1974: Lectures, Workshops, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada

June, 1974: Workshop: cellists of San Jose Youth Symphony

June-July: Paul Rolland Workshop, University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee and a second Rolland Workshop at San Jose State University

Aug. 3-17: International String Workshop, Cambridge, England--Paul Rolland

Aug. 21: Kato Havas Workshop, England. Taught cello class.

Sept 27,
Dec. 6: Stanford University Special Master Class for cellists. Student performers. Principles of Teaching. Open to auditors for fee. (Once a week, two-hour sessions).

*A list prepared by Margaret Rowell

Rowell: I was always interested in the American String Teachers Association. It had its local functions, its northern California, southern California. Being interested in teaching it was automatic that I should be interested in an organization like that.

Riess: When you were selecting the music and training these cellists from fifteen states, you went to Dallas and did work there?

Rowell: Yes. We just had one day to do it in. I sent them the music ahead of time. I had things that played very, very easily and sounded very beautiful on the cello. I had them, basically, on the melody part and then had string teachers, with violins, violas and cello, a double string quartet, playing their accompaniment, which sounded beautiful.

Riess: It's the equivalent of the master class then? It's that kind of situation?

Rowell: No. I wasn't teaching except a little bit of training of the whole bunch together. I didn't hear them play individually at all. There wasn't time for it. You got down there and had that one day. In fact, I finally did not conduct them. I don't like to conduct. I like to train them but I don't like to stand up there and conduct. I turned it right over to the conductor who was doing the rest of the program.

Riess: In 1966 you gave the two-hour lecture demonstrations each afternoon following Mr. Suzuki's workshop in the morning?

Rowell: That was exciting. Mr. Suzuki I just adored. He would illustrate it in the morning and I would turn it around to cello in the afternoon. David Commanday was one of the students who would come over in the afternoon and play. It was very impromptu. I love to have it that way. I don't like a staid thing. And I knew I could depend on them to do what I wanted illustrated.

Riess: Then in 1967 you taught a course for string teachers at the University of Southern California Summer Session.

Rowell: Yes. That was very interesting. Phyllis Glass was in charge of that part of the music department. She had myself and Elizabeth Mills, whom I consider one of the finest violin teachers in the whole nation, each teach a course at USC. It was very interesting. They came from as far away as Canada. They were all teachers in that course. It was loads of fun to have them for that length of time and work with them. I enjoyed it tremendously.

Riess: A very sympathetic group, the teachers?

Rowell: Yes.

Riess: You talked earlier about the competition, that it wasn't the prize but the competition of one student against another that was exciting.

Rowell: Well, what I meant when I said that was that a person loves to say, "I won this." I guess the winning over somebody else is the part that I don't like to think about as much. There is ecstasy and tragedy in every competition.

Riess: Yes, and the woman who is transcribing this oral history, said to me at some point, "But why did she go on if it was so difficult to perform?"

Rowell: [laughter] That is funny. That is marvelous! Everybody finds it that way, almost everybody. There are a few people who really enjoy performing, and perform better for an audience, but very few.

Riess: Many of us do things that are really a challenge to ourselves, but it's so obvious in a musician, where there is so much pain about performing, and yet that's what it's all about.

Rowell: I find with my own students, those who really have too much inside them that they want to give so terribly much, that they're sure they can't possibly get it all out, those are the ones who are nervous.

Riess: That same year you did a lecture-demonstration at ASTA Western Conference in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Rowell: That was loads of fun. I was teaching at San Francisco State at that time. I took eight of my players down. They were doing the Villa Lobos [Bachiances No. 1], which is a difficult number, at least I think it is, to really get down in very good form. We had them ready to take down there, and then found the school wouldn't pay any of our expenses. We had to take these eight cellos down on the plane, and how to do it was really something! It costs so much to take a cello, usually a straight half fare, and that's plenty.

San Francisco State said they'd contacted all the airlines and done everything they could. There was no way they could possibly send them. They couldn't afford to pay that amount. So it was all off and we couldn't go.

Rowell: I took it in my own hands. I put a sheet out on this front room rug and tried to figure out how I could get eight great big cellos in their hard cases in the least space. I called up one of the airlines and told them that I wanted to see them. I showed them the diagram that I had of the eight cellos.

He finally took pity on us and said, "What you need is one of our pods." So he had a person come right to the main lobby of the airport and put the cellos in and take them down in that pod. They took it as baggage, no extra charge, very nice.

It was really a lovely occasion. Not only did they play, but we illustrated everything for them. There again I had to speak, and I had two of those players, Becky Rust and Roslyn Thorpe--they're just beautiful cellists today--illustrate everything under the sun, upside down, all around, everywhere on the cello, showing that there wasn't anything they couldn't do on that instrument, even though they were just going to San Francisco State. They did outdo themselves in their playing, so it was really a lovely occasion. I think we all had a good time. I don't remember a thing about Las Vegas though! [laughter]

Teaching at Mills, San Francisco State, University Extension, and UC Berkeley

Riess: When you taught at Mills and San Francisco State, did you have students who were enrolling because they wanted to work with you?

Rowell: I don't know. This is funny. You see, I don't think that I had any name as a teacher. If I have, I think it has been acquired in the last few years and absolutely, grossly exaggerated. I can say that. I mean, I know it is. In those days I didn't think I had any name at all or any reason for anybody to be coming to study with me who wouldn't come anyway.

When you ask about Mills, I would not say that I had outstanding students at Mills, at all. No. I love Mills. I love the surroundings. I love to drive out there, I love the music building, and I enjoyed teaching there, but I would never say that the students came there because of cello, except for Sally Kell. She came because I gave her a scholarship for all the four years.

Now, for San Francisco State, I did have very interesting students and quite a number of them have gone on professionally. I really enjoyed teaching there very much.

Riess: Its music department has a good reputation?

Rowell: I guess so. I don't know how it is today. I can't answer that. I enjoyed my being there at that time. I did feel as if I had some very good students. I would have around twelve students, which is quite a lot just for cello. They developed well.

Riess: When you were on the staff at Mills, did that mean that cello was offered as a subject, or was it private lessons?

Rowell: Very few take it at Mills. I was teaching so much privately at that time. It was funny. People paid more attention to my teaching at Mills than any other place I've ever taught. But I think it's because the newspaper published a picture of me and said I was going to teach at Mills. People think I'm still teaching there, but I stopped years ago, and I think it was about '58 or '59 that I went to San Francisco State which was much more of a challenge in every way.

Riess: Was college teaching lucrative?

Rowell: No. Mills pays you by the lesson. If the student takes a lesson, you are paid. If they're busy that week, they don't. The Mills student is not geared to professionalism.

Riess: And San Francisco State?

Rowell: It was much better.

Riess: How about at Berkeley?

Rowell: My salary is nothing, or practically nothing. You're paid by the lesson there, also, which is a very poor way to have it, an extremely poor way to have it.

Riess: Have you been teaching at Berkeley?

Rowell: Yes. I've been teaching. I think I started in teaching in 1958, first in the Extension Division. That I thoroughly enjoyed. I loved that.

Riess: Why was that better?

Rowell: They paid me much better there than they do at the regular university now. Can you imagine that! I taught at night. People came who really wanted to study the cello; I would begin them on the cello, even though they were adults. I think that I enjoyed that more than anything I ever did.

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Rowell: I also coached chamber music through extension. That I adored doing. One of the first groups that I taught in chamber music had Don Weilerstein, aged nine, in it and Caroline Lewis, the sister of Mortimer Adler and the wife of Dr. Leon Lewis, who is playing today very beautiful piano. Caroline Lewis plays all the time for the University Music Section. She's quite a concert pianist. We laughed at the difference in ages.

One of the fellows that I started in cello there, I don't know how he ever did as well as he did. He took a couple of years from me there. When I went back to Washington, D.C. I visited him. He has a family of four children. They all play musical instruments now, and he's still playing his string quartets. So I'm very happy for that.

Riess: In addition, there was also some teaching at Berkeley, in the music department?

Rowell: I didn't teach in the music department itself until quite recently. I started teaching at UC itself maybe twelve years ago, and I'm still there.

Riess: Are you developing some good students at Berkeley?

Rowell: Yes, I had some fine students. Cathy Allen has taken from me the last two or three years. I hate to say it, but I didn't think that she was particularly talented when she came to me. But she "caught on" and she got the Hertz Scholarship this spring. She's right now in London, England, studying with William Pleeth, the teacher of Jaqueline Du Pré.

Quite a number have done very [well]. Paul Hale is one of my favorites. He took from me while he was going to Cal, all his four years there, and developed into a perfectly beautiful soloist, and I'm very, very happy with him. Now he's in the Oakland Symphony.

Riess: What is the difference between the conservatory student and the university student?

Rowell: Of course the conservatory student should be much more advanced. Not necessarily so. I would say that I would put Paul Hale and Cathy on a calibre with any of my conservatory students. Paul Hale is on the faculty now with me, teaching at Cal, having just graduated. He went through his four years majoring in engineering and played the cello all the time. I think he gave at least one Hertz Hall concert a semester, not a year, but a semester while he was going through.

Rowell: He brought up "Schelomo," which is to me one of the most gorgeous things by Ernest Bloch for cello. I thought, "Oh, he can't possibly play this," but he tried out and won the Cal concerto competition and played the "Schelomo" beautifully with the Cal Symphony.

I've had many others of my students solo with the symphony. Milton Saier was one of my students a long time ago and he soloed with "Schelomo" with the Cal Symphony. He majored in biochemistry. He is a full professor of biochemistry now, at UC San Diego. I've just talked to him within the last few weeks and he's doing a great deal with his cello. He said, "I'm playing better than I ever played in my life." He has three children, a wonderful wife, a graduate of the Royal Academy in London in piano.

I'm very interested in these people who play very well, who are really concert calibre, and yet they have gone on with another profession.

I sometimes prefer these people to the conservatory students. Of course, it depends on the inner stamp of the individual, not so much on their training, whether they have developed themselves as an artistic individual, and whether they're really truly interested in music. If they're excited about it and have a good technique, and really love music and want to play, they're going to play.

Paul, you couldn't keep from playing. The same with my Cathy Allen, who just graduated and played the Imbrie concerto. You couldn't keep her from playing. She wanted to play all the time.

Riess: But that pressure that the conservatory students exist under, you don't think that that's a positive thing?

Rowell: Well, I don't know. That pressure may not be so great. I think that my students get more chance to play at the University of California, even in chamber music and so on, than they do at the conservatory.

Riess: How involved do you get in their lives? I mean, you might very well recommend that one be at one place or another, for instance.

Rowell: I won't interfere with that in any way. They have to choose where they want to go. I'll help. I mean, I may give some advice, but I don't know, I'm not one for giving an awful lot of advice to young people. I think they have to make those decisions.

Riess: I should think you'd be one who'd be asked for advice all the time.

Rowell: Oh, I don't know, I do say that I'm awfully happy when my people do want to have a regular education and not--

Riess: And not specialize?

Rowell: Well, it could be specialized, too. It depends on the individual. Scott Kluksdahl found it very hard last year, his first year at Harvard, to do as much with the cello as he wanted to do. But he says this year he is getting along much better with the two. I hope that he may become a soloist. He is cut out for it.

Kurt Herbert Adler, Henry Cowell, Madi and Ernst Bacon, and Julian White*

Riess: You mentioned contact with Kurt Herbert Adler. When did Adler come to the Bay Area?

Rowell: I don't know when he first came here, I really don't.** I know that he was called to conduct the UC Symphony, which was really no symphony at all. Very few musicians actually came to UC to major in music in those days. There were some good players, but it was a very weak symphony orchestra. This was probably before Roger Sessions' time; Roger Sessions came--when? I can look that up and see very easily [1945-1951]. But when he came he found a very bad orchestra, extremely weak. So he had them send right back for Barbara Lull Rahm to come out. We have already talked about her.

Riess: When was Adler asked? Why was he asked?

Rowell: I think he was asked to come out because the orchestra was in such a low, low state, and of course he didn't then have any name at all at that time that I remember. He came out, and I knew that he was going to conduct the UC Symphony. He'd conducted some orchestras before that, I guess, but he--

Riess: He was not in San Francisco at that point?

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*[recorded October 24, 1983]

**Adler was in Chicago in 1938 and was with the San Francisco Opera in an assistant capacity.

Rowell: Oh no. He came to this coast to conduct the UC Symphony, which was very small. He found the whole orchestra very run down. They were almost incapable of playing. I don't know that he found any cellists. Within the first week here, just about, he called me and asked me if there were any cellists.

Riess: How come he called you?

Rowell: I don't know. I guess I was teaching in the University Extension at that time.

I had Bonnie Bell, as she was at that time, and her very best friend, Ellen Odhner--and I don't know whether she had had any lessons before she came to me. The two of them were great pals. I imagine they were around fifteen at that time. I asked them if they would like to play. "Oh, sure," they'd like to play up in the Cal orchestra. So they went up there and played under Adler for I don't know how long--as long as he wanted them, I guess as long as he was there. I thought that was very brave, because nobody had the faintest idea that he was going to develop into the conductor that he did.

Riess: Did that group become very good?

Rowell: It most certainly was better. I don't remember it being anything remarkable at all ever at that time. But it surely improved.

You asked about Henry Cowell in your letter, and that's very interesting that you should mention Henry Cowell, because he's almost forgotten in this day and age, I would say. How did you happen to ask me about him?

Riess: Actually, I'm not sure now. I'd heard of him and I knew he was here.

Rowell: I'm surprised, because I didn't ever hear of him as a musician until I married Ed in 1936. But he [Cowell] was born in 1897. When I did hear about him, it was mainly through my Alameda County Music Teachers Association, which I think I joined almost immediately. They would talk about him in whispers and all this kind of stuff. [laughter] I had to get in on the inside of it. Of course I knew he was the inventor of tone clusters, which were all the thing there. And that he used his fist and his elbow and everything else in playing, and was very fascinating. But at that time--. I think when I first heard about him, he was in San Quentin and very few people know this.

The music teachers were much older than I was, most of them, and I looked on them as a bunch of old music teachers. [laughs] You know what I mean? That sounds funny; they were wonderful people.

Rowell: But they were very much interested in him and just took his side. They would go over to see him. They would do everything under the sun for him. They fought for his release.

He was there because he was a homosexual. Isn't that interesting? I don't know whether that should be in or not.

Riess: Of course it should.

Rowell: In this day and age I think we're so--

[telephone interruption, and returns discussing telephone call]

Rowell: She [Josephine Smith] talked it [disposition of piano] over with me the week before she died.

I talked about Smithie and Albie [Mary Albro] I hope in here some place?

Riess: You didn't talk about them.

Rowell: They were my dearest friends. My sister Marion and I climbed with them everyplace in the Sierra. You know Smithie just died? And [laughs] the attorney called me up and said, "Can you give me this person's address? Can you give me his telephone number? Can you give me that? I gave him everything for every person he wanted. [laughs]

Smithie and I go back to nineteen thirty. She didn't take that big trip with us.

Riess: She was a musician too, wasn't she.

Rowell: She played the cello when she was young, but I never heard her play it. She'd given that up before I saw her.

Now we'll go on with this.

Riess: All right. Henry Cowell went to San Quentin.

Rowell: Yes. He was there for I don't know how long, I really have no idea, because I was a young bride at the time. Here I was going to those music meetings and hearing them whisper about it, you know, but those music teachers just stood behind him and said he shouldn't be there and that he should be out. It was really a crime that he was sent in, I can see now.

I don't know how long he was there. I think that it was kept very quiet. I only say it because I appreciated right then--my heart and soul went to those nice sedate, proper music teachers,

Rowell: who were giving their all to see that their musician friend got out. I only knew him for his tone clusters and all the different things that he did.

Riess: Interesting.

Ernst and Madi Bacon?

Rowell: Oh yes. Of course Madi was really responsible for all my connections with the university. I don't know when I first started in the music extension [1951?], but it was Madi who called me and asked me if I would teach in extension. She was the head then.

Riess: Music extension was on this side of the bay?

Rowell: Yes. They had offices in a tumble-down wooden two-story structure, off of Bancroft Way, where Zellerbach is now, facing Dana.

I have to hand it to Madi. She built up a simply remarkable department out of nothing, and people flocked in to take lessons in everything from banjo to concert violin, cello, piano. She built the extension with her own enthusiasm and passed it on to Estelle Caen, sister of Herb Caen. It was under Estelle's management that Casals came first for a month and then later for two weeks of master classes. It was one of the first great master classes, and netted the university a neat sum!

At first I had to have at least two people in the class to have a class. They wanted four in a class, but two could do it. I had several sets of two men start cello with me at that time from scratch. I can see one farmer coming in from Walnut Creek and another man coming in from Standard Oil--putting the two of them together, telling them they had to get together during the week and practice--and both of them developed into cellists. I can't get over it. I don't think I could do it today.

Madi was very--she of course was not a manager; she was a soloist, I would say. But she really fought for the people who taught under her, and I remember enjoying every minute of it.

Riess: At that point was her connection with music as a choral director mostly?

Rowell: No, I hardly knew that she was a choral director. She was just a thorough musician all the way through. She was a pianist basically and she taught singing, and so on. She made no point of it. She may have had the boys' chorus at that time, and of course she was wonderful in that. I did get to know her very well through that, because some of my best students came from that.

Rowell: Her brother Ernst is a fine composer who should be more widely known. He came right at the time when UC was going "all out" for the modern music, for which of course Roger Sessions and others made our campus world famous. Ernst Bacon's music will always stand by its own merit. It is beautiful, well conceived and belongs to no period. He gave me his beautiful cello sonata, which I immediately taught to Bonnie and to others.

Riess: When you say that you could never do it again with those two men, the farmer and the oil company executive, is it just because it took so much psychic energy to put them together?

Rowell: I don't know. I just--[laughs] I don't know why I said that really. Yes, I think I get tired much sooner than I used to. I find that the length lesson that I used to give really tires me now.

Riess: And that was working with a lot of grown-ups.

Rowell: Oh, I enjoyed it. I loved it. I loved every minute of it.

Riess: I put Julian White on this list, too.

Rowell: Julian White was a very dear friend of mine. I don't feel as if I knew him that well, but I went to everything he did. And of course he lived close to me here. I thought he was a very great teacher.

One of his students is coming within the next two weeks to the concert series here on the campus and will be playing in Hertz Hall. And I'm going absolutely, because I watched him practically develop, and I think he's one of the great pianists.

Julian White had a way that I thought was simply marvelous--the phrase of the music, his touch on the piano was beautiful. It was bringing what I always wanted--he was centered in his own great big fat body [laughs], and it centered right straight in and brought all the music right into him. So it was a beautiful touch. Then, with the depth of his understanding, he could just play for hours and hours and entrance you with his playing. But the fact that he could give that touch to his students was what fascinated me.

Flying Around, 1970s

Riess: Since we're working with this list, let me mention some of the workshops and lectures that you did in the 1970s.

You were at the Western MENC-ASTA!

Rowell: [laughter] Don't put it that way. Music Educators National Conference, and the American String Teachers Association. Now, where?

Riess: That was in Tucson, Arizona, and then again in Texas, and Edmonton, Canada.

Rowell: Those were all fairly close together there.

Riess: It looks as if in 1973-1974 you were really running around.

Rowell: I was. These were the years when my husband was in the convalescent hospital and I hated to leave him for even a day because I always spent every evening with him, but I found this very exciting. I'd say, "Pay my way on a plane and I'll go anywhere." It was my only vacation.

I took Carol Morrow with me to Tucson to illustrate for me. She did a beautiful job. She was in high school. She's tall and very very black. She was playing the "Pampeana" by Ginastera at that time, which she later played and won with to be soloist with the San Francisco Symphony. She illustrated everything for me, and they're still talking about her down there, because they loved her as I love her. We stayed several days and did it several different places.

In Texas, I didn't take anybody with me because they were going to have somebody for me there. I thought I'd just show them what to do and they would illustrate it, and that would be fine. I was so excited about really going to Texas. We were flying along and all of a sudden they announced that the plane wouldn't land in San Antonio. It was snowed in.

We were just absolutely flabbergasted. I knew they were meeting me at the plane. In fact, I found out that they had a dinner in my honor that night, too. Anyway, we flew into Houston and sat, and sat. I've never had such bad service in my whole life. We landed, I don't know what time of day there, but we had to claim our suitcases and sit, freezing cold, on a bench. We couldn't leave our suitcases and even go to the ladies' room, let

Rowell: alone ever have a meal. They had served us a little bit of breakfast, as I remember, when we left San Francisco, and we never got another taste of anything until after midnight that night.

We sat there hour after hour, not knowing what was going to happen to us. It was already almost dark by the time they finally got us a bus--it was still storming. There were mainly men in that bus. I think I was one of the only women, and the men were so nervous! They would just be jumping up and down because everything was iced over. The bus driver could not get on the main freeway because he didn't dare get up on any of the on ramps. He said that they were too dangerous. So we had to go clear out of town going through all the little streets, until we could finally get on a smooth place. Then he only had one windshield wiper that worked for him, so he could hardly see. It was snowing hard.

We finally got to the airport bus station about midnight, but there were no hotels for anybody to stay in--of course, I had a reservation--because there was a big rodeo there and everything was filled up. I tried to get in touch with my hotel and I couldn't. It was about two hours before they came down to get me, because there were no taxis.

I was so starved when I got there! I said to the hotel clerk, "I just can't stand it!" He was eating his sandwich, so he gave me half of his sandwich. I was never so thankful for food in my life.

The next day the people who were supposed to come down and illustrate for me, from the University in Austin, couldn't get through, nobody could get through in that snow. But I took a little girl there who played the cello well and went right on with both my demonstrations, and they went very well.

It wasn't the trip that I had planned but I enjoyed it, every minute of it.

Riess: Such an adventure. And then you went on to Edmonton.

Rowell: Oh, Edmonton. Yes. I have to go East this December, just a little over a month now. Somebody said, "What are you going to do in the cold?" And I said, "Oh, well, if I was in Edmonton at twenty below zero, I think I can take Indiana."

Rowell: But Edmonton was very lovely. The University of Alberta is marvelous. I knew Claude Kennison, a very fine cellist who asked me to come up and give the master classes there, and give them a workshop and so on. I spent several days there and had just a wonderful time.

Riess: I've gone to master classes, and there's always the moment when the teacher picks up the bow and does the thing that makes everybody fall off their chair, it's so perfect.

Rowell: And that I can't do.

Riess: Do you take your own instrument, in fact?

Rowell: No. I never take it with me. I can pick up their instrument and I usually can illustrate what I want with the bow. I don't tend to just sit down and play, but I can usually illustrate with the bow what I want. I think the whole idea is to really get them to do it.

Of course, I love to take Renie along with me, who does play beautifully. The Paul Rolland workshops from 1974 to 1978, at the University of Wisconsin in Milwaukee, those were really a joy to give. The first year I didn't have Renie with me. She was a student the first year in the course. After that I had her come as my assistant and we worked together all the way through this.

One of the magazines that came out lately said Paul Rolland was the greatest violin pedagogue and teacher of this country. I do think that in many ways he is, because he had wonderful ideas of teaching. How much my ideas are mine, and how much I've taken from him, I can't tell you. I've told you about meeting him at first and finding out that we agreed so completely in our basic concepts. I think it's still amazing. But it isn't. It's just as Suzuki and the great violinists of Europe are not as far apart as we thought they were. We thought we had to send our people to Europe for that finishing study. We no longer do, because they can get so much from Suzuki and finish with our wonderful conservatories here.

Riess: You have Kato Havas listed.

Rowell: Oh, yes. I'd taught with her here before that. I haven't got all of that down. I went to England to teach at Cambridge. That was my first experience crossing the ocean. I didn't expect to like England. I wanted Paul Rolland to take us to Switzerland, but no, we were to go to England. And it's a beautiful place. The minute we got off the plane I fell right in love with England.

Rowell: Kato Havas had told me that I would come down and stay in her house in the south, and that I would look out on one side at the Norman ruins and on the other side at the Isle of Wight, and that right at my door would be a cow. [laughter] It was exactly that way! It's very quaint and very lovely.

Riess: What you did mention once was how you responded to the old Norman ruins.

Rowell: Oh, yes. I took the train from London. Claude Kennison met me and took me to Kato's class for the first meeting. Here this house was, right out in an open field with the cows all around, and you had to open two gates to get into the house. I knew by that time that Kato didn't want any visitors. She's a very lovely person, but she also wants her own--what should I say?--quiet. She wants to be by herself a great deal. She doesn't allow any of her students to come out to the house. So when this person walked into the house I said, "Oh, pardon me, but what are you doing here?" She said, "Well, I happen to own this house." [laughter] I was the one who was taken back.

She knew that I loved the out-of-doors, so she took me to a point that stuck out in the ocean right there, the ocean that went right across to France. There were very high cliffs, all green, and a little tiny stone church there that was pre-Norman. It was wonderful. When I saw everything there, I couldn't help it, I just flung myself down on to that green grass! Feeling that earth and that green grass under me, and being alone out there on that point, I thought it was wonderful. I think I may have shocked her [laughter].

Grand Dame du Violoncello: Bloomington, Indiana, 1983

[Interview 9: August 12, 1983]##

Riess: We were going to talk more today about the workshops and so on that have been your life in the past years.

Rowell: Yes, they didn't used to have them as much. Workshops now are what people run to, and it's so in everything. The medical profession and every profession has workshops for its people.

Riess: They can be wingdings, ways for people to go off and do what appears to be serious for an hour in the morning and then play all the rest of the time.

Rowell: Oh no, ours would wear you out! They do go all day long and night, yes, they really do.

Riess: Recently you got a tremendous award at Bloomington.

Rowell: Yes, at the University of Indiana at Bloomington. And that was really an award. But I feel as if I failed more there than anyplace I've ever been. My ears bothered me in flying and the doctor prescribed Sudafed, so I just took mobs and mobs of it, and I didn't realize it acted practically as a drug for me. And here I was to give these two master classes, and I hardly knew what went on during them. The people were playing and I hardly heard them. I didn't do what I usually do in a master class, or in a workshop.

They told me that they didn't care. Janos Starker said, "I don't care what you do, we're giving you the award. We're here to honor you, not for you to work for this." I really felt that people had come from all over to hear me, and that I didn't do it justice, but they surely did it to me.

They put me up at the Hilton, and Janos Starker had great big bouquets for me in my room, and they waited on me hand and foot. Different cellists came from quite a number of different places, Canada and all over. One of them fell on the ice coming and I don't know what it was he broke, but it was quite a serious accident and he landed in a hospital. And something happened to another one on the way and so on!

Riess: Well, it's usually you who has an adventure along the way!

Those who came from far, were they people who had studied with you?

Rowell: No, these were almost always the teachers from the universities, cello teachers. They were the fine teachers of the United States I would say, and Canada.

Riess: And the students?

Rowell: The students in the master class were from the University of Indiana.

Riess: The rest were coming to honor you by their presence.

Rowell: Yes. And I didn't feel that I gave them anything really, and that has disturbed me ever since.

THE SAN FRANCISCO CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC

The honorary degree

DOCTOR OF MUSIC

is hereby conferred upon

MARGARET ROWELL

with all the Rights, Privileges and Honors thereunto appertaining

Given this 17th day of May, 1980.

J. Archibald Calhoun
CHAIRMAN, BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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Indiana University School of Music

and

Eva Janzer Memorial Cello Center

proudly confers upon

Dr. Margaret Rowell

the title of

Grande Dame du Violoncelle

in recognition of her universal contributions
for the art and teaching of cello playing.

Given on the twelfth day of December, 1982
in Bloomington, Indiana

Kenneth A. R. Gros Louis

Charles H. Webb

Rowell: Of course I was wined and dined. Janos Starker had all these dignitaries, everybody there for dinner. His home was one of those white mansions with the pillars and everything else, and I was very much impressed with it. "I have a very lovely wife who manages everything beautifully," he said.

He took me aside, "Now I want you to come with me," and he took me to his wife's bathroom and wanted me to see it. It was all out of pure white marble, actual marble, and she has a sunken bathtub. He has a sign outside, "This is the room that Kodaly built." (Kodaly wrote the Unaccompanied Sonata for Cello, which Starker has recorded and made famous the world over, and he's gotten so much royalties from just that record alone that that money built this beautiful room for his wife. [laughter] So that's what the little sign means: "This is the room that Kodaly built.")

Then he took me just beyond that and opened the door and I've never seen anything like it. There was a swimming pool the whole length of the house, the biggest thing I've ever seen in a home in my life. I would say it was at least the length of this whole house here, and heated; it was steaming right then in the evening. He says, "I go in every morning and every night and have a swim." I think that's a wonderful thing; that's what's kept him in excellent condition and has loosened him up in these years of his cello playing. Just imagine having that right there!

So he was very, very, very good to me in every single way. From that point of view it was a wonderful thing, but I came home and felt very sad that I hadn't done more, and I haven't written all those people yet who came to see me, and I have more guilt hanging around me, but we'll get beyond that to something else.

Riess: What was the name of that award?

Rowell: I'll have to get it, because I can't tell you. [steps away briefly, then returns with materials] You don't want to spend too long on that. These are telegrams from different people, cellists who couldn't come basically saying they can't come.

There it is. [brings document to interviewer]

Riess: [reading] "Indiana University School of Music and Ava Janzer Memorial Cello Center proudly confers upon Dr. Margaret Rowell the title of Grand Dame du Violoncelle."

Rowell: You can say violoncello; that's its real name.

Riess: "In recognition of her universal contributions for the art and teaching of cello playing."

Riess: How many times has this been given?

Rowell: This was the third time. It was given to Pierre Fournier from Switzerland and Raya Garbousova, who was there. This is the way I used to know her. [looking at picture] She was a delicate petite beauty. Now she's quite stout.

Riess: Where is she from?

Rowell: She was born in Russia.

Riess: It's interesting. You're just a simple American girl among all these Europeans.

Rowell: Oh yes, I should say so! [laughter]

Riess: But of course you aren't.

Rowell: I am!

Riess: How interesting that really most of that company of cellists is European.

Rowell: Yes, oh yes, and Fritz Magg! I must put Fritz Magg's name in, at the University of Indiana. He is European trained and a beautiful cellist, just a beautiful cellist, and a wonderful teacher. I always use his books for all of my students, Fritz Magg's Basic Exercises. I think he's one of the finest teachers in the whole United States without a doubt. He has been my friend for years. I've had him out at the conservatory several times for master classes. In fact he was here after that in February, giving one course at the conservatory.

Riess: Was there a financial award?

Rowell: Very little, very little. No financial award connected with that; that's entirely an honor, and they made that very, very clear. They paid me a thousand dollars, which meant my trip and things, and of course they paid all my expenses there, but that's nothing really. It was not considered that way; it was considered that you did it for the honor, yes.

Riess: It seems that every time I've called you you've just gotten back from somewhere or other.

Rowell: I got back from that just as--in fact I was there for my birthday, and did they celebrate it! They celebrated it in every way. The first day I was there, even before my talk, Mr. Starker said, "You

Rowell: can come to my master class Saturday afternoon if you want to," and I did. How he ever counted that I would, I don't know, because in the middle of his master class they came in with a cake that big and that big [gesturing]--how many would that feed? It would feed one hundred fifty easily--with candles all over the darn thing, lighted, right in the middle of his master class. So everybody celebrated my birthday right then and there.

That was the day before my award, on Saturday, and my birthday, if I remember right, was Sunday. And Sunday they had all sorts of things for me. Every night we went to somebody's house for dinner: Fritz Magg's and Janos Starker's and Helga Winold's. So we were wined and dined, and my birthday was celebrated every place, so I didn't miss out on it as I thought I was going to do. I didn't know they even knew it, but of course that has to go into all your statistics.

I got back, and right in February I left for Columbus, Ohio, to give a master class workshop type of thing, and that one of my former students, Lucinda Breed Swatsler had arranged. We like to have about twenty cellists as a good number for a master class. (At North Carolina we sometimes work it up to thirty.) When she phoned she said she had thirty, and then she phoned that she had forty, then when she phoned that she had fifty, and finally that she had eighty, we almost died, we didn't see how we could ever teach eighty cellists. I took Irene Sharp with me. I didn't see how we could ever teach eighty cellists at once, and it was very difficult I will admit.

When we got back there the first day was just roasting. The place we were <u>in</u> was overheated, so that the first day was just awfully hard to teach. But after that they changed the place and we had three days of very good teaching there.

Riess: What is the format for dealing with eighty people in the master class?

Rowell: Well, we really did it. They told us that they would be from five years to sixty years of age about, and Lucinda, who arranged it all, really worked it out very, very well. She had it down so that we taught the young ones in front of the older ones so that they were getting a lesson in teaching from that. Then we had the master classes with the other ones, and then we had everybody playing together, so that it really worked out very, very well. People came from all over. They came from New York and they came from all numbers of places. And she had it, I will have to say, very well worked out.

Riess: And so everybody after that feels that they've gotten some individual attention?

Rowell: I wouldn't say indiividual because that isn't what it's for. It's not a master class, it's a workshop, and there's a great deal of difference, so it is the principles of teaching that we're trying to get across to them in a workshop. We illustrate the very basic principles of teaching as we're teaching the young ones, and then allow them all to do it together, and they can just as well do it together; if they don't get it all right they understand what it's about. It's almost better to teach them in a group because they see what the others are doing if they can't do it themselves.

Riess: You certainly are adequately rewarded for that, I should hope.

Rowell: [laughing] I laugh at it because I just came home from my last one and realized if I'd stayed at home and taught I would make more anytime. But we do enjoy doing it.

Riess: You two women need a manager.

Rowell: Oh, we do, everybody tells us that, everybody tells us that.

New York: Hoff-Barthelson, and Paul Tobias##

Rowell: We went to Columbus, we had three days there, and then we went on to New York. I was very anxious to see Joyce Barthelson, the pianist of our old trio. I knew she was getting older (she's a year older than I am), and people told me she wasn't well at all and that I should get back to see her. She lives in Scarsdale, and she is half of the Hoff Barthelson School of Music there. The other half is Virginia Hoff Greenberg, who is now active in music circles in Carmel. I believe she's 87! It is one of the finest schools of music anywhere in the vicinity. In fact it's so much larger than our conservatory, and just beautifully run, I was simply amazed at it.

I spent really two days there, and heard the music going on and couldn't believe it. They have over six hundred students. I don't know what we have here at the conservatory. And they have excellent teachers. I got in on a trio concert which was excellent, Brahms's C Major Trio, and the cellist happened to have been one of my former students here. I liked her so much, and she's teaching there. So it was the teachers playing a trio, which was just excellent.

Rowell: I was just awfully happy to be there, and to see Joyce, who really was much better than I expected to see her. So we had breakfast, lunch, and dinner together and so on.

Riess: Did you do some playing together?

Rowell: Oh no, oh no.

She's on her fourth opera. She's had her other three operas all given by the New York Opera Guild; they've produced all of them. Carl Fisher and Company have her under contract before she finishes them. But she's having a hard time orchestrating this last one and getting it down to the right length. It was fine as she had it, for doing in high schools, which she would love to have it ready for, because she makes them that way. But she had to reduce the orchestration, and she's having a hard time cutting out things; it's always easier to add than to cut out. But she's still working right there on it.

One of her operas was given at Kennedy Center for the Fourth of July bicentennial, 1776-1976. She was happy to have been honored.

Riess: Did you have a workshop there?

Rowell: Yes, we gave a very good workshop while we were there. It was almost impromptu, and it was one of our great joys. And one of the students who came there, and I taught afterwards individually, is coming out to the conservatory this next year. Of course he'll have Renie for a teacher. I was very surprised because he's going to Princeton and came down from Princeton for it and decided to come out here for the conservatory after that, which I thought was quite surprising.

Riess: How does Hoff-Barthelson compare to the conservatory?

Rowell: It doesn't. They are geared to the beginner in piano and in the instruments up through high school. Of course the San Francisco Conservatory has a wonderful preparatory department, but the conservatory as such begins at the college level, and is for the very serious professional player, which is quite different. Hoff-Barthelson would feed into a conservatory like ours rather than the other way around.

Then we did go down to New York City and give a master class there at the New York School for Strings--which is just opposite Juilliard there--in the evening, and we had a wonderful time. I had no idea we would have a turnout, but there was a good turnout. And they had youngsters from that school to be our "guinea pigs," as it were, about I would say maybe eight or ten of them.

Rowell: I was surprised at the number of people who came. Robert Gardner, who's the first cellist of the New York Opera Orchestra, came and enjoyed it so much; he was just wonderful afterwards. And Dorothy DeLay's sister, who teaches cello at Juilliard, also wrote me afterwards, and so on, so that that little experience there was a very happy one, because we didn't know what to expect when we went down there to a strange crowd at night! In fact there were little school kids who came to it, little youngsters in the audience. I think it started at almost 8:30, and we went on till at least 10:30 that night.

So that's the way it was in New York, and we had a wonderful time there. But I stayed two extra days, which I hadn't expected to, but yes I did because my Paul Tobias--whom I think I've spoken of enough--I never get to see him back there, and to see him in his own home was wonderful. I stayed right with Paul and Liz in their apartment in New York, and they are a wonderful, very happy couple.

I'm so happy with the way he's turning out because he could be a--what should I say? Well, completely a soloist of the type that removes himself from everything. But to see him in his own home with his cats, and a parakeet that he gives the whole run of the house! It flies from one room, comes and sits on his head for breakfast and then sits on the cat's nose for breakfast and it picks at the cat, they just enjoy each other! [laughing] And Paul is in a wonderful surrounding there. He has a wife who is a fine pianist, and they really enjoy living.

He insisted on taking the days off. He knows my love for museums, and so he took me to the Metropolitan. I've had trouble with my legs and I didn't know how I could do there. I was afraid of the Metropolitan. So he said, "We'll just get a wheelchair," which he did. So I went around that place; we would race around from this place to that place. We did the whole Metropolitan that day, and the next day we went over to the Cloisters. There I didn't have a wheelchair, we climbed all those stories, those stone steps from bottom to top and every place. Then we went driving around and I just had a wonderful time, feeling that I knew New York much better than I'd ever known it, because I had never been taken around in it before.

It was lovely, just lovely. It was just absolute relaxation, and everything so easy, they take it so naturally. You ask what you want for breakfast or anything and you get it. You plan what you're going to do and maybe it comes out and maybe it doesn't. So it was very lovely.

Rowell: Since then I might just say he left to be the soloist with the Juilliard Orchestra for a South American tour, and he came back from it excited. He had played the Haydn D Major and the Tchaikovsky Roccoco variations. He evidently did them very beautifully and has return engagements in quite a number of places in South America for himself.

From their apartment--which they pay very little for because she gets it as being a pianist, they look right out on the Hudson. They're on Riverside Drive, and there isn't another building to be seen from their place except just the trees down by the river and that's all. And how they ever have an apartment like that; you could think you were anyplace when you look out their windows. So I enjoyed it immensely.

Riess: Do you come in contact with any extremely gifted, surprising people when you go and give a workshop? Is it in your mind that suddenly out of a crowd of people one person will emerge as a very, very special musician?

Rowell: No, no, I'm not even interested in it particularly. However last summer, not this summer but the summer before, I did see exactly that with a cellist--I think she was seven years old!--who played absolutely completely beautifully in every way. And she, thank goodness, wasn't the least bit spoiled, but she could sit down at that cello and practically play any thing beautifully and play any kind of music you'd want. She had a mother, thank goodness, who was a trained pianist and a beautiful human being, and the love between the two of them was really remarkable. And that small child who played the cello, what she played, she played as well as any concert artist. I don't know how large her repertoire was, I don't care, because it was what she played and the joy and the freedom and the beauty of what she played that was just astounding; technically or anything the instrument did not bother her in any way. Her name is Mirjam Ingohlsson. I asked for her this year when I was back at Greensboro, but she wasn't from there, she had moved away, and I don't know where she is. I'd like to keep track of her.

Riess: You're saying you don't really go into these situations looking for that.

Rowell: Oh no, no. I wish everybody could have music, as they have language or as they have something else, to make their life richer, and I'm just absolutely thrilled when my students--I remember one that I started just about as he was ready to retire from his wonderful job, and his wife made him start the cello, and now he's

Rowell: playing string quartets three times a week. Their whole life, no matter whether they go to the Islands, wherever they go, is how many quartets they can play.

They are getting ready for retirement and they thought they were going to retire to Carmel. They went down and started playing with quartets down there, but now the others are too old for them and they're afraid they'll die off and they won't have a quartet. They're not going to retire until they find a younger community where they can really play quartets at least three or four times a week, and that means really serious playing, and they're still coaching quartets with Colin Hampton--he's the best coach around here. So that I love to see, when a person can take it that way. I think it should enrich the life. I feel with music as I do with literature; you don't just take a course in literature thinking that you're going to write the greatest novel or book, you take it for your own enrichment.

Riess: Yes, yes, of course. For some reason I need to be reminded of that.

Rowell: But everybody does, everybody does. When we were back in Washington at the wonderful Rostropovich thing last year the people said, "We must not have as many cellists because we haven't a place for them in the community, and we haven't the right to educate them and then not be able to pay them." But I love it when somebody asks me whether he should be a lawyer or a musician--because he could be either one so easily--and my reply would be, "But do both, do both."

You can carry your music almost as far and your life can be very rich if you can have chamber music as your great desire and keep up the necessary work on your instrument, which can be done in much less time today than it could have twenty years ago because we understand how we play. We don't have to develop muscles in the fingers because they haven't any muscles in them to begin with. The strength comes through the body. Of course it does take discipline and training and great musicality and growth! It's the development of the total body-brain that makes music so fascinating.

Everest From the China Side, Without Oxygen

Rowell: I was just back from that the last of February, the first of March, almost a day or so before Galen left for the Himalayas to climb Everest. I was so glad to get back. His trip was delayed a week, which evidently was responsible in a large part for them not making

Rowell: the top after all of their months and months of preparation for it, years of preparation for it. But everything went wrong at the last minute. Did you know about that at all?

Riess: A bit.

Rowell: Well anyway, what happened was that they were all ready to leave, and Galen had gone and spent a whole week in New York with the photographer who was to go along with them and he had come out here and I had met him. They had $200,000 from ABC to take the pictures of the whole trip. That was their underwriting from the very beginning over two years ago. Just a week to ten days before departure, ABC found out that China would not allow their equipment to go through at all; they had to withdraw both the $200,000 and the cameraman, which just knocked the bottom right out of Galen's trip of course. And I don't know yet how they're going to pay for it.

But they got their wonderful sixteen men together--I never met a finer group of men--and they all decided to go ahead anyway. They had planned the trip on a very small basis and they did it that way. I never heard of such a thing: they went without any Sherpas, without any porters, without any oxygen, carrying all the loads themselves from the very lowest right up to their 26,000-foot level, which they reached.

Riess: On the China side.

Rowell: On the China side, on the new side, the new approach that hadn't been done before. So they were planning on all of these new things, one new thing after another. He wasn't just doing the same Nepal side which everybody does. Everything was new!

But the thing that got me was the thing of doing it without oxygen, and I do think that that was perhaps--. But the oxygen is so heavy to carry. If the Sherpas are carrying it, they're used to carrying everything and they know so much how to do things in the mountains, which sixteen wonderful people here wouldn't necessarily know.

They were there for three months, and when you go one solid month or more without hearing one word, and you know they're on ice and snow the whole time, and you know they're up at the 25,000-foot level, and you don't hear a word, you begin to wonder what's happening. Then when you do hear that they've got a man just ready to make it and he'll probably make it the next day, and then flash! people call from New York City, from everyplace under the sun and say, "Oh, they've made it! They've made it." And it was

Rowell: another party! It was the party who had started up two weeks later than they, and had their $200,000 and had their wonderful photographer and excellent trained Sherpas since they started in Nepal, not hostile China and were able to do the whole thing.

Riess: Were they an American party also?

Rowell: Oh yes, they were an American party and they and Galen are very good friends. In fact I believe Galen has the commission to write up both trips. He knew about the other trip, and he held nothing against them because he liked the photographer so much, and of course they could do it. They were going from the Nepal side, where the trails are right there. They had all their Sherpas to do their climbing and all their carrying. In fact their man who made the top and did it so wonderfully, the Sherpas had gone up beforehand to do the trail for him, and then helped him up. He made it alone at the very last, but it was over a trail that was well marked and with oxygen up to the very last and the Sherpa had oxygen the whole way.

Riess: Well, nothing amazing about that.

Rowell: Not particularly, but then it's wonderful to have done it. He did do it without oxygen the last stage, but he had been protected up there. Galen said the hardest thing was that he should have had more people to divide the weights, because the weights were very, very heavy when you had to climb right straight up with that heavy weight and then do it. It evidently takes so much more energy without oxygen.

Riess: They were on the mountain for three months?

Rowell: Yes. Galen had planned on a great deal of that because his idea, which was a very good idea, was to get them up to those high things so that they would be acclimated to the very high, and then bring them down, so they wouldn't stay up and get whatever it is you get in your lungs. They'd come on down and then they'd go up again until they would get acclimated. So they had a great deal of that.

But then there was something in the last 2000 feet that with their equipment they just couldn't make it, and the monsoon set in. So everything went against them at the very last.

But the thing that I like best of all was that all sixteen came back, with their fingers and toes, and all of them were the very best of friends after the whole time. I think three months for men to be alone on a mountainside with all these difficulties usually separate pecple, but not in this case.

Riess: Did Galen have a lot to do with choosing that group?

Rowell: It was entirely his choice. He was the leader and they were his choice.

Riess: In his books he deals a lot with this question of the composition of the group.

Rowell: I haven't read all his books!

Riess: Well, it's obviously something he's wanted to do.

Rowell: Yes, oh yes. And he did have sixteen of the finest people under the sun. I think his head man who stayed basically in base camp, Bob Craig, was just one of the finest people you could ever imagine. I didn't realize he's the one who started Aspen in the old days. He still lives in Colorado and has his great big businesses there. But he's the one who got Schweitzer over and all of those people in the very first days when Aspen was an intellectual institute.

Bob Craig is really a very broad-minded man in every way. I sent Galen some little clippings from Dag Hammarskjold. Bob Craig told Galen all about Hammarskjold and his own relationship with him and so on. So he's a wonderful man, just a very great man. They were all from different professions and they evidently got along very well together, which I think is wonderful. So that's that.

Riess: That whole three-month period in a way you felt in suspense?

Rowell: Well no, I didn't really at all at first. The last month I was absolutely beside myself, because when I knew that they hadn't made the top and had to come out, and I couldn't see why we didn't hear from them and why they didn't get down, that I just couldn't understand, how we could get no word whatsoever out from them. That last month, the third month, was a hard one. So that's really hard, very, but we won't go into that now. It's all over and it's wonderful.

Galen's very best book is just now out. I told him he'd given me a new grandchild! The title is Mountains of the Middle Kingdom, Exploring the High Peaks of China and Tibet.

Nick Anderson, and Fine Old Friends Continued

Rowell: Okay now, that was New York. [refers to papers] Of course I came back to do an awful lot of teaching and did it during that time. One of my students, Claire Garabedian, got what is the highest prize the Cello Club gives, which happens to be the Margaret Rowell Award. She has to give a whole concert which Cello Club pays for. I'm going to have to be working with her for that. She also happens to have been, I'm very proud to say, one of the people who went to prison for her work out at Livermore and spent ten days in prison, and is now up in Washington State, so I haven't had a chance to see her and get to work with her.

Then Nick Anderson has given several remarkable concerts this spring, one right after the other.

Riess: Yes, and he's a pupil whom you wanted to give a brief biography of.

Rowell: Yes. Well, he says that he's studied with me the longest continuously of any student, that is he has hardly missed a lesson, in ten years, and so on, so that it's been ten consecutive years. And I will say that he's gone ahead I think very much this last year. He's always giving concerts. He gives concerts in the Old First Church in San Francisco at least once or twice a year. And I can't remember how many concertos he's done this year with orchestra. He's done the Beethoven Triple, the Dvořák and the Haydn D Major and the Schumann, and I can't remember what all else.

Riess: How old was he when he started with you?

Rowell: I would say seventeen, eighteen, somewhere around there. So anyway, he had a good beginning, but I feel the music has progressed a great deal.

Riess: This is interesting to me,that he studied cello, and then he studied ten more years with you, and then suddenly in this last year he's really moved ahead. Why?

Rowell: I can't tell you. This is very interesting, a very interesting question. One thing that he has done, he videotapes every single lesson. He's brought his video machine to every lesson. It takes him an age to set up here with his camera and with his recording and everything. He's done that for several years. It's hard on me when I see him dragging all that stuff in and then do that! [laughing] He says it does help him a greal deal, that he studies the lesson afterwards and so on.

Rowell: I think he himself has developed. I think he was very closed in and almost self-centered, I would say, in his cello playing. And all of a sudden I think he's opened out, and he is very much interested, he's arranging loads of concerts, not only himself but with different people, for the nuclear freeze movement. He gave one last week where he brought a Chicago opera singer--you may have seen it reviewed in the Chronicle--and paid him quite a price for coming and giving this concert here in Berkeley, and there were probably fifty people there only. But it was a beautiful concert, marvelous concert and took much planning and doing. Some of his concerts draw quite big crowds.

He runs all of those things, sends them out, and every time you get the notice there's a whole blurb on nuclear freeze, a whole, two-page thing usually on it, so he's very much wrapped up in that, and has Musicians Against Nuclear Weapons and so on. And I think that has opened him out a great deal.

Riess: Yes, I should think so.

Rowell: While I was in North Carolina I had, thank goodness, a part of a day with a dear friend of mine, Emily Lewis, one of a group of three very close friends, who have their birthdays on the same day--May 19. All lived within a block of each other when I first knew them. Through the years they have let me give them their birthday party. They are a great threesome. Besides Emily Lewis, the others are Vernez Olshausen and Madeline Duckles.

Vernez Olshausen is the mother of six children and I don't know how many grandchildren, I can't tell you now. She just had a new one last week, and she has more children in Europe than she does in this country. But anyway she's been a friend of mine all through these years. Whenever I'm in any kind of trouble she comes over and sits with me and brings her wonderful chicken soup or something else. I mean when I'm worried about Galen in Pakistan or Tibet and I haven't heard, she'll come and stay till midnight. She is a remarkable person and a remarkable friend.

And of course Madeline. I have letters from Madeline from Europe. I'm going to give some of them back to her because she's telling about her times when those kids were all young, her five boys. And now they're all married, but one. She has a wonderful family.

Emily Lewis was married to Dr. Rubin Lewis, and he came to take cello lessons from me. He died several years ago.

##

Rowell: She and Dr. Rubin Lewis met in South America where she was a nurse, tending to the sick with all the diseases they have down there. But she came up here, and since he died she's gone right back to teaching, especially Planned Parenthood. She has spent more time I would say in many of the different countries, especially Africa, with Planned Parenthood than here. She's running over there maybe three or four times a year and then comes back.

I got to see her when I was in North Carolina. She was in Chapel Hill and ran over and we had time together once again. Her face just beams. I don't know whether she's good looking or not, because her face just shines, and she is enjoying life so much. She's giving a whole training course there for people going into this type of thing in different countries. She's spent time in India, she's spent time all over the world with this. And the beauty that comes from her is just radiant. So to have her come over when I was in North Carolina and visit was just really wonderful.

Riess: You're so busy, yet you keep in touch by letter?

Rowell: Oh yes, oh yes. Not long letters or anything, probably a postcard to her I'll be sending off, but that's all. With Madeline, I have Madeline's three- and four- and five- and six-page letters when they would be in Europe, and those are worth saving, really masterpieces.

But all of those three people are so interested in the nuclear freeze and the fate of this world. You know how much Madeline Duckles is I'm sure, and Vernez Olshausen just as much so. She plays in the Oakland Symphony and is remarkable. I don't know how she does as much as she does. She is a beautiful poet and she has brought each of her children to love literature at its best.

1983 Pomona Cello Institute, Berkeley Visitors, and Bellingham Trip

Rowell: Well, now did I tell about going to Pomona at all yet? Maybe I better go ahead with that now then.

Riess: That's an amazing piece of paper, you keep turning it over and getting new items off it. [laughter]

Rowell: After I got back from North Carolina I only had a couple of days at home, and then went to Pomona College for the National Cello Institute; it's down there for a week. And thank goodness it was not hot weather. I can't stand hot weather. The whole week was just made with my kind of weather, so I enjoyed every minute, enjoyed teaching. I teach the teachers basically who come and of course some of the high school students who are advanced. I love them, love to go there.

But after that. One of my former students, Joanne Grant, who had taken from me at the conservatory and lives in Canada, had written me a long time ago saying that she and her husband were coming down to the Pomona National Cello Institute, and she wanted to come back for a week and take lessons from me with her pianist. (Her husband was coming too, Stewart Grant. He is a fine composer and conductor.)

Well, I haven't at this stage of the game even a bed or cot in this house for company to stay. The upstairs belongs to my Frank Vigna, who is so wonderful to me in every way. So here they were. I couldn't ask them to go down and get a hotel in Berkeley. They had their tent with them, so they set their tent up on my front lawn and lived out of it the whole week they were here! The bathroom got plenty of extra use. When they took their tent down, I was simply horrified! Here was this great big brown diamond on my lawn, and it took it weeks and weeks to even begin to get over it. Isn't that funny? I just couldn't believe that it would do that in one week's time.

But it was a great pleasure to have them, and I did coach her every day on the big works that she was working on and on teaching and so on and so forth. They were a lovely, lovely couple. They had been married just a year. As I say he's the conductor of their orchestra up there, and a composer and so on, and she's the cellist, doing lots of work, has loads of students of all ages, so they were a wonderful pair.

Riess: They had all their meals with you and everything?

Rowell: Well, most of the meals here, but they were running around to San Francisco and doing other things too. But I did get worn out, I will say that, I got very worn out because I was already tired from the Pomona thing. And I haven't gotten over it yet, I am tired most of the time now, which is an unusual thing for me. I'm tired when I wake up in the morning, which I'm not used to at all. Anyway, I enjoyed it very, very much.

Rowell: But they left one day and the next day came Lucinda Breed Swatsler. She's the one who had us back at Columbus, Ohio. She and her husband, who is going to art school, came out and stayed the week. Now they did not stay with me. They commuted back and forth from Palo Alto where her mother lives. She is just lovely. She has gone ahead with her cello so much that I'm very, very happy for her. She always was a good cellist. I had her even when I was teaching at Stanford, and she comes out every year, but never for as long a period as this. So we had a long week together going over most of her literature with her and doing all sorts of things.

Riess: You've been doing a lot of intense sessions.

Rowell: Those two weeks were very, very intense. I had little time to see my friends or my own students and see how they were doing after my long absence.

Right in the midst of that two of my old, old students that I had taught--I can't tell you how many years ago--came together. I'd forgotten they knew each other even. One was Nancy Rich, who lives in Boston, Massachusetts, and is still playing her cello. She had gone on with it a great deal. I taught her in high school I would say basically. She came up from Los Altos for her lessons, and played very, very well. Then she went to one of the colleges, I've forgotten where she went. She's turned out not to be a professional cellist, but she's in some sort of social work back in Boston, and loves her cello but also climbs a great deal in the Himalayas and Nepal and is always sending me cards from there and keeps up with everything that Galen's doing of course.

With her came Peggy Waite Thow. Now Peggy took from me and was very, very talented. They knew each other as girls. I did teach at Stanford during those years and I gave them their lessons, even though they were in high school, down there. Peggy was very talented, and she married very young. She went on writing as well as playing the cello. They moved to Italy, and I would get cards from her from many different places. Little did I know that she would come back to Berkeley to settle. Her husband is a professor at UC in the music department in composition. And she has a one-year-old baby that they bring up every once in a while to show me. They're just delightful.

Those two met here, came up on the same Sunday afternoon when I had the other people here, and we had quite a time, when Joanne was here and all of those. So that happened.

Then I've just come back from Bellingham, Washington. And that's my last escapade. In fact I haven't been down to buy a quart of milk yet or butter or anything like that. I'll get down today sometime.

Riess: Maybe you can raid Frank's refrigerator.

Rowell: Oh no. But I get by very easily.

This was really a lovely experience because Renie Sharp and Terry Sharp, her husband, insisted that we were going to drive up. How much have I mentioned about Gerard Leclerc? Very little.

Well, Jerry Leclerc is here right now. He has come from where he is the solo cellist of a chamber orchestra in Geneva, Switzerland. He got here the middle of July I guess, and gave his concert at the Piano Club on the 29th of July, which was just the day before we started for Bellingham. He gave a very fine concert, it was excellent.

And I said, "I can't possibly get ready to leave the next morning," and Renie said, "Well, you have to, there's no doubt about it!" I was going to have one day to pack and get ready after the concert. (I might just say in passing, I made three recipes of brownies all in one great big pan and they all burned. But my Lucinda Breed was here and came to the rescue and did everything for me that night for the punch. I served all sorts of refreshments and did everything under the sun.)

Surely enough, Renie and Terry were here at half past nine the next morning, and we started off. I thought it was just bedlam, and I was no more ready, but now I can see why they did it. We started up the coast, and we <u>really</u> went up the coast of California, and saw the beaches. I had never seen all of them, northern California, and through the redwoods, miles and miles and miles of redwoods. Then the Oregon coast was the thing that got me. You have seen the Oregon coast?

Riess: Yes, I have. They did that because they knew how much you would adore that, yes.

Rowell: Well, that Oregon coast just got to me. Those redwoods and ferns and then the beaches. Terry always saw that we stayed at very nice places and he had his guidebooks there and everything went just according to Hoyle. We stopped at one little place where our room looked right straight out on the ocean. So I snuck out before breakfast the next morning and went wading in the Pacific and wiggling my toes, which I love to do.

Then we went on driving all that day through wonderful country and spent that night on Mt. Rainier, which suited me to a T. I had been there years ago, but a very, very short time. This time, of course there's still snow right at the hotel at

Rowell: Paradise, there's plenty of snow, but the avalanche lilies are coming up through and the Indian paintbrush and other things. So we took little walks around and really enjoyed it tremendously. And then drove all the way around the mountain and back to Portland and Seattle and then on up to Bellingham. It was just a delightful trip, the whole way was just wonderful, just beautiful. So it was really a wonderful holiday for me.

Then we gave the classes there in Bellingham at the University of Western Washington for about four days I guess. I flew back, I left Renie there, she isn't back yet, because I was only their guest artist and she's on the faculty. Janos Starker is coming later.

What they did for me, because I was the guest artist was, they gave me a room overlooking the whole bay and everything and it's on two floors with a winding staircase that goes up and a spread of a place to work on that would be as wide as this room, and all the comfortable chairs under the sun, refrigerator and a stove of course, and everything that anybody could want. Comfortable chairs and of course on the upper floor the bath and the beds, and this lower floor, the whole place to work on and everything at the same time. Irene and Terry both had to be in the dormitory with all the students and the bathroom is on the next floor up, and those were those little crowded rooms with two cots!

The last morning, when I was leaving, the front door was not open when I got back from breakfast. I went to every other door in the huge building with my room key, but nothing fit it anyplace. It was Saturday. I finally had to call to the campus police and they came and let me in. I said, "Am I really the only one in this building?" And they said, "Yes, I guess you are!" [laughter] So I was living in grandeur such as I have never had, while Renie and Terry were cooped up in something.

I was there just as a guest artist and I had to give one lecture for the whole group of violinists, violas, cellos, and bass, and so on. I was of course always worried, as I always am, Renie had to see me through that! And it came off very, very well. So I was happy about that. That was much better than Bloomington!

Then what I did was to fly home, and of course from Bellingham you fly in a little tiny plane, as I knew from having been there twice before. This I loved. Talk about your islands! This is what is so beautiful. The combination of going up by car and coming back this way was wonderful.

Rowell: One of my very dear friends from Alaska was just arriving as I was leaving, and she got off the plane and I talked to her so long that most of the seats were taken. I said to the pilot, "Oh, I wanted one of the best seats." He said, "Do you want the co-pilot's seat?" I said, "I surely do." So there I sat right up at the front with him, you know, with the front coming right down here. He said, "Put your feet on the pedals," so I did.

Riess: Amazing!

Rowell: And off we went.

Riess: How small a plane is this?

Rowell: It seats eight. Little wings, you know, so you'd just be right out over everything, and those islands are just beneath you everyplace. It's just wonderful. Well, one time when I flew up there before I had to crawl on a wing to get in, a little two-seater, so they usually have very small little planes there, but this was quite a decent plane.

It flew me to Seattle and then I took the plane home. So here I am. And as I say, I'm just here and that's all!

Riess: I'm glad you've done all those things because I know they all fit into your life, those are the things you love to do.

Rowell: Well, now there are those beautiful flowers Jerry just brought me. I immediately gave Jerry Leclerc a lesson yesterday, with his pianist who's come from Switzerland. To give these two concerts, he brought his pianist from Switzerland, a beautiful pianist, but he had to bring her husband and two children to do that! So they're all staying over in Marin County, and they came yesterday for a coaching and brought me all these flowers. They are lovely people. So there is my life up to the present time I guess.

Riess: It's very intense.

Rowell: Yes, I don't get any time really to myself and I need it!

Family Traits: Margaret and Galen

Riess: Well, that catches you up.

Rowell: I'll think of all the things that I wished I'd said. I wish I could put in more about my Galen because I really am fascinated with the way he has developed in his lifetime. I would love to put in quite a bit about him.

Riess: Did he come back from that trip already planning the next one?

Rowell: No, he didn't, and he hasn't mentioned it yet. But he has so many things in the offing. Right now the thing that is happening is that November 17 in New York is his opening of the International Center of Photography in New York. National Geographic Society is back of it. It will be a three-month's thing. It will open November 17 and be there through February, and then probably travel all over the United States to the different museums after that.

There are three photographers that Geographic has chosen and he's one of the three. He's very, of course, happy over that. He says that I have to go back for the opening. And the two people who are heading the things there are Robert Redford and George Schaller, the writer. (He's the one who was with Peter Matthiessen on the Snow Leopard.) George Schaller is a very dear friend of Galen's. So the two of them are heading the list of people for the opening night.

Riess: Only a day or two after Galen was back from the trip, he was down on Solano Avenue for a reception.

Rowell: Oh, one day after.

Riess: I was dumbstruck at that ability, which you have also, to come back and carry on!

Rowell: I was so afraid he wasn't going to get back for that; he was in New York just before that, he'd just arrived the night before. But he got there for it.

Riess: What I'm seeing is that parallel to you in him.

Rowell: Oh, we are so much alike that it's almost pathetic! We really know it. The funny thing is we drive exactly alike. I was with somebody yesterday, Nick Anderson. I always want to say, "Well now, you know, you could move into there or something else." He says, "I know that" and keeps driving without changing. But with Galen I don't do a thing because we drive exactly alike. If we drive across the bridge he would change a lane exactly when I would, not before, not after. And we were never together with our driving for a minute, but everything that we do--. They tell us that our

Rowell: hands are exactly alike. We measured them. Look at that hand, it's the biggest, funniest hand you ever saw, and I was almost ashamed of it. But it is exactly Galen's hand! So many things are alike.

I do think we're very much alike in that inner thing that we have too much energy for our own good and we spend it and don't really have as much energy as we seem to have. I mean to say I'm tired right now, and I'll go right straight through the day. I've been tired for three weeks, but I go right through, and everybody says, "Oh no, you aren't tired." But I am, I really am.

Riess: Well, what I was thinking about Galen and also about you is that you go from one peak experience to another without what to normal people would seem like a kind of time when you integrate all of this stuff.

Rowell: Yes, we don't get time enough to integrate, we really don't, either of us, I can see that, I can see that. He's lucky that he does have his wife because she really does help him a great deal in organizing it and doing things. She's really excellent. I ought to have somebody like that! I'd give anything to. Yes, and they're doing very well.

But I'm looking forward to that show in New York now.

Riess: You're going to go?

Rowell: Oh, he says I just have to be there for opening night. I don't know whether I can stand on my feet or what I can do, but we'll see.

But I do think his pictures are lovely. They really amaze me. His latest book, he just turned the pages for me and I haven't read it. I know I'll enjoy reading this because it's taking Marco Polo on his trip and Galen going over exactly the same land. I really love the pictures because I do think that he has a way of seeing them. And I laugh for that. I don't know whether I mentioned that, I really do laugh. I just came across my picture that I'd gotten from the museum when I was back there of El Greco's "View of Toledo"--and I always had this card of it about this big. But have I told you about picking out a picture with Galen? I haven't?

When Galen was, I don't know, five or six, I wanted a picture for his sun room where he always played. And I took him down to what was then Cal Bookstore where they had I would say fifty or

Rowell: sixty great pictures in one of those boxes to look through. We looked and looked through them, and he stopped at the "View of Toledo," and there was nothing else but that. I liked it too of course.

We came back home, and I took Ed down to see it. Ed said, "Oh no. Unh-uh." I didn't realize that Ed's eyes were not good at that time even then. It was too dark for him, it had clouds and everything in it, and he didn't want it. He said no. So I took Galen down again. We went all through the box again. Nothing but that, he wouldn't accept anything else. I took him down a third time, and finally I thought, "Well, if this is it, it's it." It was for Galen's room not Ed's. So we got it and it's still there.

Galen and I have this between us every once in a while because I have always thought that his pictures were too dark. His pictures are all very dark. And if he goes for anything it's for clouds. And every once in a while he'll slip to me, "Well, those are El Greco clouds, aren't they?" I know what he means. So that I know that that one picture meant much to him.

Another time Ed and I and Galen, when he was very young, went over to a whole exhibit of Rembrandts at the de Young. And of course Ed--I can see with me as I am now--got tired very soon. I had been there before so we went through rather quickly and sat down and Galen was nowhere to be found. I went back after him. I could get back in, thank goodness, and there he was in front of Rembrandt's "Man with a Golden Helmet," and he was just absolutely there, just absolutely there. I couldn't pull him away.

When we got home--I think he was about in the sixth grade, he would have been about twelve then, wouldn't he?--he went down to the library by himself and got out a book on Rembrandt and read it, which is very different from the kid he was, you know, because he was always playing so hard. I never thought anything about it, but that picture also has the very light spots and the dark spots, and I can see those in his pictures now so clearly. Almost too clearly.

Two Last Thoughts*

Riess: Margaret, harking back to our earlier talk about the Depression days, what worthy causes do you play your cello for, or did you?

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*[recorded October 24, 1983]

Rowell: Oh, don't ask me to name them, because I have a good memory, but! No, no. I just don't know, because I never wanted to be paid for playing, and I'm still that way really, I think. Some of my friends when they play with me have a terrible time, because I either send back the money or--I just did it to somebody the other day. I don't want to accept it if I think they can use it better than I can. So to see people give it when they haven't got enough for themselves--I don't know, I've always been interested and fascinated by the underdog. All my sympathy and everything, whether it's for good or bad, I always go out for the underdog. I can't help it. The other people seem to get along without needing my help, but the underdog needs something. He needs some reassurance and how is he going to get it? I don't know.

I was so shy and so I never--. I came across something the other day that said, "I know I will never amount to anything or do anything, but this makes no difference. The world needs those little gnarled trees that are this way and that way and not straight and tall." [laughs]

Riess: This is something you had written yourself?

Rowell: Oh yes. I have it someplace.

Riess: Have you been keeping a journal every year?

Rowell: Just my datebook. Not a journal. I never write anything in it. It's just a datebook of where I was and what I've done for that day. Clear way back. Last night I was listening to this program on Raoul Wallenberg, and I ran to get the datebook of the exact year and date he was talking about, to see what I was doing. I thought I was making such a fool out of myself here at that time, and I was. There he was trying to free a hundred thousand Jewish people, and here I was doing this and that.

I followed every day as he went along on the story last night; I turned my pages to July 27, 1940, and I was able to follow right along. My activities were of no avail at all! I was teaching, I was doing this, I was doing that, going to concerts, and there he was doing that. I felt so worthless!

Rowell: There is something else I've made a note to say: I don't know whether I got it in, it's just a little tiny thing, but did I tell you the thing I remember about that [1916] Yosemite trip more than anything else? We drove through that dust all day and most of the night to get home from Yosemite, and we got home at midnight, and the first thing--I could not wait to get inside that door, I could not wait! I remember the feeling in my stomach, of all places. I made one dive to get in and get under the piano and get my cello out. At midnight! I simply had to get my cello out.

I didn't know how lonesome I was for it--I'd only had cello at most a couple of years then, hardly that--and I just thought I would die if I didn't. The rest of the family went up to bed and I just simply got that cover off my cello as fast as I could and sat down to it.

Riess: Can you remember whether the noises you made were pleasing to you yourself?

Rowell: Oh yes. That was one thing, evidently from the very beginning. To me I'm shocked that they put me ahead as fast as they did. You see, I took the cello up very late, but the first time I drew a bow across the string I just thought, "This is gorgeous. This is what I've always wanted." I related it to the Schumann-Heink experience.

I never was asked to practice in my life. I wouldn't know what it was like. That tone was what I evidently got from the beginning, and didn't know I had it, because it just absolutely was there. But in six months I was in the orchestra, and by the end of the year I was the first cellist out of about seven cellists.

I'm sure it was that quality of tone, which I never counted on at all. After Joyce Barthelson went back to New York, when she would come out she would bring somebody and come up to this very living room. And long after I'd stopped playing [in performance], she would say, "Margaret, you have to play for them. I want them to hear that quality." [laughs] She would make me get it, and I would say, "Oh, I can't do it!"

I ran across a newspaper account of my playing, I think it was at the Women's City Club, that called attention to that. I was unaware of it. Of course, you are. Just as my croaking voice--[laughs]. I mean, if you have a good voice for people to listen to, you don't know it. Unless you've cultivated it.

Renie too is marvelous at this. I heard one of her students this week. I've never heard a more beautiful cello concert. When I came out of it, I said, "If that had been Rostropovich playing tonight, I would have said he was at his very, very best." A

Rowell: sixteen-year-old playing a complete concert of the most difficult music, and so beautiful that I couldn't believe it. Such gorgeous quality. So we believe that from the very start they can get a good tone.

Transcriber: Nicole Bouché
Final Typist: Keiko Sugimoto

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APPENDIX A

Unitarian Fellowship

Our Unitarian group was a group of couples who broke away from the First Unitarian Church to form the Berkeley Fellowship of Unitarians. I did not pay attention to the reasons. I was and still am very fond of Raymond Cope, who was the minister at that time. As far as I can understand, the disagreement was over the Sunday School. It was not a really negative attitude, because we all ran back to the First Church for many of their occasions. Now the Fellowship group is composed so completely of young people with their own minister that the "old couples" who broke away merely get together at someone's home once a month and have their own discussion, with one couple in charge. It has a very warm feeling. I try not to miss it.

Elizabeth Lewis helped me put together a list of the members of the old group, as of July 1983:

Scott Anderson, lawyer
Lauriel Anderson, teacher, artist
Harriet Blades, writer
Alfred Compton, M.D., retired from Kaiser (pediatrics)
Kathleen Compton, docent, Oakland museum
Robert Cockrell, retired professor, Forestry Department, UCB
Zylpha Cockrell, pianist
Klaus Dehlinger, M.D., head radiologist, Herrick Hospital
Jean Dehlinger, M.D., volunteer community worker
Kay Dols, retired administrator, Early Childhood program, Berkeley
Don Foley, retired professor, City Planning, UCB
Katherine Foley, artist and photographer
James Harder, professor, Hydraulic Engineering, UCB
Marie Harder, former college professor of psychology
Dorothy Jones, former secretary, now volunteer community worker
Max Knight, retired editor, translator, writer, teacher, "has written many books on Switzerland and other topics"
Charlotte Knight, retired special education teacher
R. Lynox Lewis, retired career counselor for Richmond Unified School District
Betty Lewis, retired group worker and special education teacher
Sedgwick Mead, M.D., retired head administrative physician at Kaiser Rehabilitation Hospital, Vallejo
Marjorie Mead, retired nurse
Harriet McCreary, retired teacher
Patricia Pope, retired social worker
Bea Reed, retired teacher of psychiatric nursing
Marvin Rosenberg, retired professor of dramatic arts, UCB
Mary Rosenberg, retired professor, Birmingham University, England
Willard Rosenquist, retired, Design Department, UCB, "remarkable work in inlaid enamel, etc."
Anna Lou Rosenquist, musician, "pianist, active in all peace movements, organizer of monthly Sunday morning group"

Margaret Rowell, musician and professor, Stanford, UC music departments, "wife of deceased Professor Edward Rowell, who served on Unitarian Seminary Board for years"
Barry Seelye, M.D., retired surgeon
Mary Seelye, retired teacher
Augusta Trumpler, retired teacher, "widow, chief astronomer of Lick Observatory, and head of Unitarian movement; a strong force in her devotion to the education of the young people"
Gordon Tyndall, semi-retired professor, business administration, UCB
Margo Tyndall, minister and social worker, "organizer of our monthly Sunday morning group"
Harold Weaver, professor of astronomy, UCB, "in charge of Lick Observatory; international president of astronomers"
Cecile Trumpler Weaver, social worker, "in charge of the Sunday School"
Frank West, retired chemist, Shell Oil
Marion West, volunteer community worker
Kent Zimmerman, M.D., retired psychiatrist, Children's Hospital, Oakland
Kay Zimmerman, retired school counselor

comments in quotation marks were added by Margaret Rowell

APPENDIX B - 1.

Music

San Francisco Chronicle, This World, Dec. 14, 1975

A Person as a Vehicle In Connection With Music

SUN DEC 14 1975

By Robert Commanday

THE foundation of musical life is made up of myriad teachers among whom stands a key pillar, a Teacher.

Last Thursday was the 75th birthday of one who has that rare distinction, Margaret Rowell. Her name may not be widely known to the public for she has not been a solo performer for many years, and her own modesty is exemplary. Her work, however, though not publicly identified as hers, is widely felt here, and far afield, through countless Rowell-inspired cellists.

Margaret Rowell's influence is manifest in what is possibly the most active, largest association of cellists in the world, the Berkeley Cello Club. Formed by Colin Hampton years ago, and meeting for many years at Mrs. Rowell's home, it has always been connected with her.

The Berkeley Cello Club now reaches some 400 cellists. It commissions cello pieces and offers scholarships. As many as 100 cellists, teachers and students, attend monthly recital meetings. It is a professional fellowship and sharing almost unique to players of that instrument.

Practically every major cellist who has come to town — including Casals, Rostropovich, Rose, Starker, Nelsova — has visited Mrs. Rowell's home in the Berkeley hills and meets with members. Two months ago, the master classes given by Rostropovich to a capacity audience in UC's Hertz Hall, came about because Mrs. Rowell wrote him last year and instigated it.

The club gave a dinner in his honor, and 100 young cellists on the Hertz Hall stage, performed for him, Denis De Coteau conducting.

★ ★ ★

I RECALL the effect of Rostropovich's first and informal visit to Mrs. Rowell's home several years ago, and his excitement in meeting and talking with the students and teachers. Exactly the same electric sense of discovery is sparked by Mrs. Rowell whenever she teaches, which is most of the time (at home, at the San Francisco Conservatory and in workshops and clinics here and abroad).

I remember one very young cellist after a lesson which had run over to four hours, leaving her house with a light in his eyes, murmuring, "She's wonderful!" — and going home to practice for two hours more.

★ ★ ★

BONNIE Hampton who personifies the effect of Margaret Rowell's teaching and is now her teaching colleague at the Conservatory, described it this way: "Anyone who has experienced Margaret is no longer the same person one was before. It's something that happens rarely, as with a great performance, but it happens to anyone who comes within her orbit.

"She opens people up, allows them to grow and to find what is best in themselves," she continued. "With her fantastic creative energy, it is an integration with a philosophy of life. Through the development of her cello ideas, her whole philosophy became that of finding the most natural and freest energies, freeing the body so that the music will flow out — the person as a vehicle in connection with music, the cello as a vehicle to the music, to the larger thing.

"When I first was working with her, at age 8, I had played the piano, but ... made the difference in ... having fun and my la... finding that dedication ... love for it.

"In my developmen... years with her, there ... never a particular quest... of making cello my pro... sion. It was more a way ... life, not what you are go... to do with it. She has ha... lot of students who have ... necessarily gone into mu... professionally, but the c... has become their life. T... includes many other pro... sionals, doctors, lawy... scientists.

"Now, Margaret is ... centrating on getting be... teaching ideas across ... other teachers, the pri... ples of freedom of mo... and physical openness ... playing, which are so ... cial.

"She gives so much t... of us, and that's where ... gets her life energy, ... amazing life force, f... that giving." Miss Ham... quoted Casals from a... cent book on the last y... of his life. " 'I don't be... in retirement for anyo... my line of work . . . ... ever. Each day I am re... and each day I must b... again.' So it is for Mar... Rowell with her con... rebirth and rediscover... life."

★ ★ ★

IT IS ... from such ... inspiring musician ... great re-creation of ... is initiated. There a... music little separate w... which surround each ... forming medium an... strument, a world of ... ists, of harpsichordi... violinists, flutists, c... and so on. But the ... ples of teaching emo... in the work of any ... great teacher is the ... for all.

★ ★ ★

At 75, She's Still Among Top Teachers

When a college in Cambridge, England is looking for a top cello teacher, it calls the expert in the Eastbay.

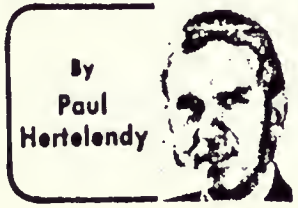
When the National Cello Institute at Pasedena needed the best instructor of the cello, it summoned the same expert.

When Northern Arizona State wanted a cello master class, it invited the same expert—all expenses paid, as usual.

So, too, with the University of Wisconsin, San Jose State, the University of Washington, Stanford, the San Francisco Conservatory, and the University of Exeter (England).

And when the prominent cellist Gilberto Munguia had to prepare a concerto with the San Antonio Symphony, he came to polish it up with the same expert—who could only squeeze one session into the jammed teaching schedule.

The object of all these visits and entreaties is a petite Berkeleyite named Margaret Rowell, who at 75 shows no signs of ritardando. She has



By Paul Hertelendy

completed over half a century of teaching, turning out pupils like Sally Kell, Bonnie Hampton, Paul Tobias, and Roger Sessions' son John among the hundreds who have crossed her portal. She became a friend of Pablo Casals, entertained Gregor Piatigorsky (who clowned about royally, playing a child's cello as if it were a violin), and induced the tightly booked Soviet master Rostropovich to spend an evening helping the youngsters of the Berkeley Cello Club.

"Mrs. Rowell is a great enthusiast, friend and colleague," sighed the travel-weary Rostropovich. "What she asks, one can't refuse."

Her vigor is worthy of a Rostropovich in itself. When ordered to rest after a cancer operation five years ago, she was found sitting up in bed the third day, working feverishly on a cello manual later published in book form.

She co-founded the Berkeley Cello Club in 1954. Ever since then she has played mother hen to the 400 member-students, aged four years on up. The oldest such club in the U.S., it improves standards as entire orchestras of cellists meet regularly and play works like Bach four-part chorales without transposition. Fanatical? Perhaps.

"I think most cellists are fanatics," she concedes, without ruling herself out. Because the soulful instrument has one of the widest ranges of any—at least 5½ octaves—she sees it as the ultimate medium for musical expression, human fulfilment, and enrichment of life. Significantly, its range encompasses the range of singing voices, from bass to coloratura.

Unlike many teachers, she rejects craft (that is, technique) as the be-all and end-all. "The teacher's dilemma is to try to build the art along with the craft. Pablo Casals and other teachers who can do this have really produced good students. There is no object in doing it just for the craft. For that, you might as well take up anything. Like even a band instrument."

Other Rowell observations, distilled from many years of maturity:

—"Oh, yes, the cello has a soul. You can't regard it as a piece of wood."

—"The most important thing for a teacher is to remain on the sidelines and listen, instead of playing. In fact I usually sit at the piano bench when my students take their lessons."

"No one approach in interpretation is necessarily preferable, there can be an infinity of them. And two different approaches can lead to the same destination."

—"Have you ever noticed how often cellists and oboists marry one another?"

—"I'm not primarily interested in producing great cellists. I just want them to enjoy music for all their lives."

"I'm a mountain person. This morning Bonnie Hampton and I hiked an hour and a half in the Berkeley hills before I started lessons. I took a vacation in Switzerland this summer, went to places like Zermatt and hiked from 9 in the morning to 6 at night, every day."

The energetic, charismatic instructor has left her mark on generations as she went through Oakland Tech, U.C., and became a regular performer in the Arion Trio, which initiated the Standard school broadcasts many years back. Now a widow, she maintains close ties with prominent Trio colleagues Frances Shorr and Joyce Barthelson, who seem to have caught the ageless and infectious Rowell energy.

Is there a musical fountain of youth energizing her?

"If you're involved in music, you stay involved in it, and you forget all about age and years," she laughed.

She still has several dozen students, and almost every day brings phone calls from still others, wanting to join the fold. But she is unyieldingly firm about restricting her musical activities to no more than 24 hours per day. Somehow, that seems a bit cruel.

Oakland Tribune
Tues., Sept. 14, 1976.

things as seen by miv schaaf

water skiing as an aid to cello playing?

It is my first time practicing the movements of water skiing. Luckily, I have an experienced instructor and am on dry land. The floor of a classroom in Pacific Union College in Angwin to be exact. Fingers like hard rubber against mine, "Lean back, farther, farther, squat down, lower, lower, loosen your knees, your arms, your hands, looser, looser. That's it, everything is the cling!"

We also practiced the breast stroke up there in Napa Valley, miles from any water. And we did bear hugs. And we banged an elbow on the piano keys and let the full weight of our arm crash down. Margaret Rowell exhilarated us all, 17 astounded people, holding our cellos.

"If you don't have the breath of the music in you, what's the use of playing? I don't want to hear a person who is absolutely perfect, he should play some other instrument not the cello; he should be emotionally involved. I don't teach the cello, never have, never will. What I do is teach the person. You must hear the musical phrase from the inside, singing in your mind, then play not from the fingers as a mechanical craft, but learn to play from the inside out. It's all so easy, it's just natural. We're not imposing ourselves on the instrument; we're teaching ourselves how to get it out."

miv schaaf

So says Margaret Rowell. "Teaching ourselves" is Rowell's bedrock principle. Most of the great cellists—Casals, Feuermann, Piatigorsky, Schroeder—were "naturals," that is, they taught themselves, "found their own way around the instrument, didn't get music through force, got it through feeling."

Margaret Rowell was a "natural," playing professionally within a year. Then tuberculosis struck, three years in bed. She could not remember how she had played the cello so easily, she had to learn it again. "I found out just looking didn't do it; I found out it was the inner feeling of things." But how can you figure out the inner feeling of things? Friends of hers, "natural" cellists, came to her house and played for her. How, she would ask, do you make that particular sound, shift to that note, do that bowing? "I don't know," would be the answer. "I just do it."

"Do it again." With the dedication of an impassioned anatomist Margaret Rowell analyzed every muscle, found out how they "just did it." And taught herself how to do it again, naturally. And went on to teach others—master cellists, master teachers, amateurs like me. Teaching what she refuses to call a new method—"it's just natural"—Margaret Rowell relates everything else to it. Tightrope walkers "walk in the center of the note, the pole is vibrating against the center of the note"; Fred Astaire leaping on one toe is "doing a vibrato"; a deer's foot is "dropping into a note"; a jumping frog is a hand extension; a paint brush slapping a wall and an ice cream scoop are bow hand actions. Even the universe: "Now they say it's a rotating universe. Well who didn't know that? Everything is. Don't think you have to plump down your fingers—the feeling is coming to you."

Rowell's son Galen is a well-known mountaineer, photographer and writer. He has climbed 15 peaks in the Himalayas while his mother helped cellists climb peaks of difficulty. Next year he is taking a party up Mt. Everest—a new route, longer, more difficult, dangerous. He faces crevasses, avalanches, lightning, crumbly rock and a hidden 300-foot headwall of ice. "Now this is what we have when we have to play a solo," says his mother.

"I am my age and I haven't very many years left," says Margaret Rowell. I don't know. This year she taught us water skiing. Next year I expect she'll get us up a 300-foot headwall of ice.

APPENDIX C

California Cello Club

When Colin Hampton, cellist, came to Berkeley from England with the Griller String Quartet, he told us of the cello club that his teacher had formed in England, and we, with other teachers, got together and in 1954 formed the California Cello Club with headquarters in Berkeley. The main purpose is to bring together a "family of cellos," the teachers playing with their students, playing ensemble music, hearing solos, concertos in preparation for performances, and in every way widening the enjoyment in cello playing for every member. I feel the Cello Club has been my chief contribution to the music world. My own students gave a yearly concert of massed cellos, as well as trios and solos, starting in 1939, to the present.

Visiting artists were always delighted to meet with us, play for us, tell us how they teach, and enrich our knowledge and love of the instrument. Pablo Casals was our past patron, and Mstislav Rostropovich is our present patron. Cellists who were entertained by the Cello Club [in the Rowell home] include:

Claus Adams
Juliette Alvin
Orlando Cole
Marian Davies
Jules Eskin
Pierre Fournier
Adolph Frezin
Bernard Greenhouse
Eva Heinitz
Antonio Janigro
Claude Kenneson
Fritz Magg
Gabriel Magyar
André Navarra
Zara Nelsova
Leslie Parnas
Gregor Piatigorsky
Gabor Rejto
Leonard Rose
Mstislav Rostropovich
Janos Scholz
Luigi Silva
Janos Starker
Marcus Stocker
Paul Tortelier
Laszlo Varga
Phyllis Young
Rama Yucker

APPENDIX D

Cellists who have studied with Margaret Rowell

Cathy Allen
Amy Anderson
Nicholas Anderson
Tim Bach
Mufreda Bell
Jean Brady
Kelly Brown
Chris Campbell
Joel Cohen
David Commanday
Ellen Dessler
Shana Downes
Lee Duckles
Dawn Foster
Mannfried Funk
Joan Garvin
Martha Giese
Paul Hale
Bonnie Hampton
Einar Jeffrey Holm
Jennifer Howard
Tim Imlay
Matthew Irving
Heidi Jacob
Kathleen Johnson
Sally Kell
Scott Kluksdahl
Joshua Koestenbaum
Neal La Monaco
Gerard Leclerc
Jim Lee
Phyllis Luckman
Paul Margen
Leslie Meeks
Paul Melvin
Jill Meridith
Kathy Mertz
Carol Morrow
Ken Pinckney
Amy Radner
Sherrill Noe Roberts
Mildred Rosner
Rebecca Rust
Milton Saier
Burke Schuckman
Irene Sharp
Peter Shelton
Lucinda Breed Swatsler
Rosslyn Thorpe
Paul Tobias
Wendy Tomlinson
Emanuel Vacakis
Wanda Warkentin

APPENDIX E

BERKELEY DAILY GAZETTE . . . *Wednesday Evening, October 10, 1951*

Musical and Dramatic Events

Piatigorsky Opens Season for Berkeley Community Concerts

By MARGARET AVERY ROWELL

If the rest of the concerts in the Berkeley Community Concert series come up to the level of the Piatigorsky cello concert Monday evening in Berkeley Community Theater, then Berkeley is beginning to achieve its own musical maturity.

No longer will Berkeleyans have to dash to their cultural mother in San Francisco for solid musical diet worthy of adults. In fact, Gregor Piatigorsky paid a compliment to his Berkeley audience by giving a more sophisticated program here than at his last appearance in the San Francisco Opera House. And Berkeley liked it!

Many expressed themselves as liking his opening Haydn and Brahms the best on his program (even though both cello and piano were seated too far back for best accoustical advantage). The hush between the movements was as it should be—the hush of the spellbound, expectant, not wanting to break the continuity. This was a tribute to the artist and, incidentally, gave a clue to one of the many facts of his artistry. That clue was his ability to hold—weld—a musical composition together, which, in less competent hands often falls apart.

This was dramatically true of the Brahms Sonata, Opus 99, in F major. Here Piatigorsky and Ralph Berkowitz, pianist, took one of the more mature of Brahms' works and made it alive and fresh from beginning to end. The opening phrase, with its terrifically wide range and spaced rests (which has even been termed bad writing on Brahms' part) emerged as a brilliant whole. The slow movement (Adagio Affettuoso) was in sustained style true to Brahms, yet with the freshness and directness of youth. It was some of the best playing this writer has ever heard from Piatigorsky. It was as if he had found new youth in bringing the years of his own maturity to a late work of Brahms.

The opening Haydn Divertimento which Piatigorsky himself arranged was clean and direct and was so deftly handled that it seemed as if it grew out of the instrument. It was as if one forgot cello, piano, performer and listened only to clear Haydn. Yet this, paradoxically, became the perfect introduction to both cello and performer.

The Debussy Sonata—using the cello as a different medium—is beautifully scored. It can easily be lost on uninitiated hearers unless, as with Piatigorsky, they are verbally told some of the secrets. Even then many of the delicate nuances were lost in the large hall. While the Brahms seemed welded together, the Debussy seemed to hang by a filmy web, gaining beauty through its very transparency.

The light numbers on the program—Saint Saens' Allegro Appassionata, the Hora Stacatto (an encore) and the Paganini Variations on a Theme were pure virtuosity and one did not become absorbed by the music, but by the player, by his command of the instrument, by his magic of making the big heavy cello into a delicate violin. It was the mastery of the virtuoso, and incidentally the music, that came across the footlights.

Gregor Piatigorsky is writing a philosophical book, due to come out this year. It will be interesting to get a glimpse into the mind of a musician who has traveled the world over.

THE ELEMENT OF PLAY

An article in two parts

APPENDIX F

by

Margaret Rowell's Teaching

Claude Kenneson

CLAUDE KENNESON is Professor of Music at the University of Alberta and is cellist of the University of Alberta String Quartet. He is the founder-director of the Cello Institute at the Banff School of Fine Arts. After reading his early pedagogical writings, Casals described him as "remarkable in interpreting my ideas, my credo in music." Professor Kenneson has written several books and is a contributor to such journals as The Instrumentalist, The Strad, the Canadian Music Educator, and the American String Teacher as well as CSTA Notes. He is well known as a cellist in North America, Great Britain, and Europe where critics have called him "an incredibly exuberant, artistic personality."

PART TWO

Pablo Casals once remarked to his cello class that "color, variety and proportion are the elements of art!" For the better part of a century, (the longevity of his musical life leaves us aghast) he entreated a legion of pupils to use the power of imagination and to seek that which was "basic, simple and elemental." 1 This was his credo in music-making and its principles supported his life-long intention to help illuminate and civilize the world in which he lived. Like many great masters, he delivered a message that all talented pupils recognized intuitively and one to which they responded with a certain natural felicity. Even in his absence from the musical world, these principles are projected and imprinted upon the fabric of contemporary musical life attesting to the vitality of his ideas and to the depth of his understanding.

In retrospect, we see that this credo attended his unique innovative ability throughout the continuum of his own life. In his case we witness a man who was essentially self-taught. He did not benefit from the type of pedagogy or the quality of personal attention that is taken so much for granted in our modern institutions. Perhaps due to this circumstance his own life was lived in a dynamic, supercharged state of self-directed learning. He selectively accepted only those pupils who could satisfy his criterion. This must have been an awesome task for him since his generosity of spirit led him so directly to a life of service to others. He excluded beginners from his class and directed them to other specialized pedagogues. Yet he taught each pupil as though he were a beginner searching for that which is basic, simple and elemental. He accomplished these ends while sustaining a protocol arising from a genuine respect for the individual. Since he himself studied the Suites of Bach in an incredibly searching manner for more than eight decades, his quest for understanding became an intrinsic element in his life. His "method" was indeed based on a noble pursuit.

He yoked his pedagogical approach to certain materials that may now seem rather remote to us, but he found an avenue of expression in his playing and teaching that had both clarity and probity. At times when he found himself alienated from specific style periods and from the musical creations of his peers, he developed a significant rationality regarding his own attitude. This kind of daring was inherent in the character of the man. His domain was not the world of Schoenberg or Bartok, but elsewhere in the classical art of the older masters such as Bach, Beethoven and Brahms. He was not alone in this.

In formulating an approach to teaching we can look to Casals' credo for a plan of action. First we must recognize that which is basic, simple and elemental; then we must relate that recognition to pedagogics that will allow the learner to experience cello playing as an activity operating as Nature intended. This is not an easy task. Few will be able to say explicitly what causes the transformation of pupils engaged in a pursuit of elemental knowledge and the use of biologically natural means. Their metamorphosis is not always amenable to verbalizatio Much of this body of information forms an important tacit dimension 2 of our understanding.

The "Element of Play" (as it was recently discussed) along with Gallwey's "Inner Game" and Havas' "New Approach" are part of an enormous complex that comprises modern pedagogy. For those who still resort to the dogmas of past centuries, there can b a startling revelation in the investigation of the work of Margaret Rowell, the astonish master teacher at the San Francisco Conservatory. Linked by tradition to two Belgian cellists, Horace Britt and Stanislaus Bem, influenced by her study with Demetrius Douni and finally inspired and reinforced by the observation of Kato Havas, Margaret Rowell currently at the forefront of contemporary

o pedagogues. Her pupils begin to emerge
he representative young artists and
hers of our period and she herself becomes
rally known through an expanded teaching
hiule that occupies her on two continents.

Her approach to string pedagogy
rests us in part because it verifies a
hesis of the traditional and the
roversial. As a point of departure in
aining her approach, one might simply
ent that no Rowell pupil ever hears her
ute a sustained cellistic performance.
ng the lessons there is no demonstration
er personal cellistic prowess. Yet every
ll pupil DOES EXPERIENCE her ability as
llist. While her pupils may not be able
erbalize her principles because many of
e exist in a tacit dimension of under-
ding, nor even be willing to discuss the
le detail of her masterful interpretive
s regarding a late Sonata by Beethoven
se of the ineffable quality of the
ght processes involved, each one of them
ws more than they can tell us" and each
has in his own way received the most
icit message from her. We might also
that her pupils run the gamut of age,
rience, aptitude and vocation.

Like other modern teachers with whom
is identified, Margaret Rowell began her
al career as a performer. As a concert
list she was a member of the Arion Trio
for ten years was a frequent performer on
adio network of NBC in America. Somewhat
r she directed her undivided attention to
investigation and application of pedagogy.
e seeking that which is"basic, simple
elemental", she arrived at a richly
igned system of pedagogics that remains
ide the mainstream of orthodoxy.
ough an outgoing and cultivated person
essing a colorful personality and many
ributes of the extrovert, she is truly
noisseur of her own inner world. There
many signs that man may be undertaking a
ematic exploration of the vast,
fectly-known universe of his own being.
s a leader in this exploration.

She has developed the ability to look
le herself, to focus her attention inward
listen for those exquisitely soft signals
a the untrained ear cannot hear. This
of awareness of self seems to lead
tly to the regulation of musicianship.
recognition of this internal world may well
st each of us in gaining a new control.
ourse many artists act on a very special
nal knowledge, an intuition. It seems
incomplete notion to hold that all
ledge is exclusively rational. With
aret Rowell the intuitive process seems
ganic act of selection and improvisation.
would agree with the late Albert Einstein
"the really valuable thing is intuition."
aret Rowell is an intuitive teacher.

Perhaps the most remarkable single
ity of her teaching is her ability to
st the player to bridge the otherwise
ated inner worlds of individuals. In
teaching there develops an expression
that leaps directly from the mind of the cellist through his movement gestures into the awareness of the listener. She has very specific means for accomplishing this result. She has come to rely on an inherently musical and highly improvisatory type of study that is unusually brief in duration, highly compressed in content, and directly linked to the ideo-kinetic mandate of her teaching. That her relatively rare art exists as a daily practice in her studio needs to be stated as fact. That her pedagogics are not an isolated phenomenon but are indeed used by many of her followers is also an important matter of fact. She has become the leading protagonist of modern cello teaching and her insightful and expansive activity keeps her at the forefront of this movement.

Much teaching that is manifest in a non-verbal approach does not draw exclusively on the traditional sources of didactic literature for our instrument, although that literature can be utilized and will function in a very significant manner. This essential consideration presents each of us with the grave responsibility of becoming highly selective in our choice of materials. It has been noted by Peter Rudolfi that in the case of the etude, the composer assumes the role of teacher and attempts to induce a particular idiomatic principle. 3 Some cellist-composers have not been able to take into account such topical considerations as the fact that it is not generally known exactly how voluntary movements are engendered in cello playing, nor does each teacher understand from where the executive orders emanate, nor why they lose their mantle of awareness as a result of learning. It was often the case with our ancestral cellist-composers that the emotional dynamics of musical intervals and harmonic relationships experienced in the ear were subordinated to the technical procedure experienced in the fingers. In light of contemporary thought, this subordination invalidates the usefulness of much of our didactic literature. However, such music is currently in the hands of many pupils and is engendering the same fateful syndrome as it always has.

Can we not look for new ways of transmitting our knowledge and begin a systematic abandoning of that study material which has no efficacy? Margaret Rowell has done this in her teaching. She creates new means of implementation of her pedagogics through the use of a very specialized, improvisatory etude. Rather than relegate her pupils to the practice room drill of unbridled repetition, she has found a more telling way of inducing specific idiomatic principles. She has discovered through her own empirical teaching experience and the observation of other teachers a way of elaborating the Dounis principles, for instance. In their transformed state, they appear in her improvisatory etudes. If she does transmit such vital information, and if it is indeed embodied in an improvisatory etude, and if she herself does not perform the model on the cello so that it can be learned by imitation--and if she does not verbalize it--then how exactly does she proceed? I will

attempt to describe the process and to discuss it briefly.

In accord with natural order, she relies on the use of idiologs that are manifest in her own mind. By nature these idiologs are very brief in duration, existing only fleetingly in real time. They can be physically gestured in seconds, transmitted by touch, understood and remembered for a lifetime by the pupil. In this respect her approach agrees with the Casals' credo in that it is basic, simple and elemental. This is worthy of our most serious consideration.

The "method" depends on several things. First of all the teacher must himself possess the idiolog whether it be sensory (the idea of a sound, sight or touch), affective (the idea of an emotion such as joy or sorrow) or kinetic (the idea of a movement). Secondly, the idiolog must be transmitted. In the case of cello playing, this can be done through touch and/or movement. Finally, the player must have an effective system of retrieval once he himself possesses the idiolog. In this instance, the power of words becomes important in the sense that a monosyllabic command can become the triggering device for those idiologs stored in the memory.

The improvisatory etudes conceived by Margaret Rowell embody certain musical elements that will elicit the appropriate response in the pupil. Their architecture is sometimes scalic, sometimes dramatically non-scalic. The musical literature that we perform as cellists is thus variable and constructed in our minds as idiologs of sensation, emotion and movement. The Rowell etudes are never to be "imagined". They are experiential in character. They become deeply understood entirely through the vivid delivery by the teacher and their emergence in the mind of the pupil as a real, tangible possession. That the cello technique can be built on this basis in the studio is one of the means that allows her pupils to perform in a way that is truly ideo-kinetic. The inner ear hears (idiolog) and directs the body to action (kinetics). The power of communication that arises from this process is largely due to the genuiness of the idiologs and the pupil's ability to organically combine them into larger structures. The more closely the retrieved form is to the "pure" or ideal form initially learned, the greater the possibility of powerful, direct communication. It should not be misunderstood that these etudes are merely arabesques or diversions from the seemingly more "serious" didactic works from the past such as the etudes of Dotzauer or Grutzmacher. They furnish the backbone of the technique. Although they comprise only one aspect of the materials used by Margaret Rowell, they are entities that can now be shared by other teachers as their structures and uses are understood.

The delivery of the idiolog to the pupil is often done without recourse to language. They are transmitted through the sense of touch and through an act of touching. By this fact alone, they gain a certain polarity with the verbalized "How To" instructions so prevalent in orthodox pedagogy. Their transmission is subject to what our scientific colleagues might refer to as double data processing. That is to say, they become reinforced by more than one sensory modality. What is seen, heard, touched, felt as emotion and acted out in movement finally gains the awareness that gives the experience totality.

Because of their very nature, these idiologs can be successfully delivered through "the element of play". One might consider a typical kinetic idiolog and its transmission. It can be transmitted in the context of a game. The teacher stands by the pupil's side and transmits the idea of movement by touching the pupil's bow arm as it performs the figure. An effective variation on this occurs when the teacher actually bows the figure on the pupil's cello while the pupil touches the teacher's moving arm. A non-instrumental guise can be the playful one of miming the idiolog with no bow in hand.

This latter variation brings us to the use of our interdisciplinary knowledge, gives us freedom to perform in yet another art form and consequently releases us from the complex "end-gaining" syndrome that is so much a part of our tradition. When we utilize mime, for instance, we concentrate our attention on a different vehicle of expression, but one that utilizes many of the same means as cello playing. That the miming is not mimicry is an important point. As well the element of play must also be understood as a means appropriate to all pupils regardless of age or achievement.

Before further consideration of the differences between transmitting the kinetic idiolog through cello playing per se as opposed to transmitting it through a mimed gesture, we should turn our thoughts to mime itself. This will refresh our understanding of some of its tenets. Mime deals with expressive forms, not mimicry. It must not be confused with pantomime which is a play of pretense because mime is an art form that is motivated in a genuine ideo-kinetic manner. It does not intend to draw empty pictures in the air in some form of pretense, but rather it "will produce a successful attitude which is like a condensed drama: perfect, complete, an image epitomizing identity, origin, destination, and intent. The outline -- or path taken by the gesture -- is incisive and direct. Preceded by an opening sign, it ends in a punctuation pause which prevents the gesture from melting into space. Thus defined, the gesture is thrown into relief, stands out from the rest, and falls into its proper place, as a part of the whole." 4

In his essay, "The Poetic Halo", Marcel Marceau has said that "a gesture is not sufficient; it needs to be clothed in a thought. And the drawing which expresses this thought must be accurate." Later in that same essay he makes a remarkable comment which I wish to paraphrase by substituting the term "cellist" for his term "actor-mime" so that the thought is conveyed in this way: "When the (cellist) sustains his action with the inspiration of his thought, the sensitive response he induces

sthe echo of his soul, and the thought comes a silent inner song. " 5

With such serious words on the art of le, how does one justify the playful spirit fthe element of play? The element of play os not concern itself with the content of n art form, but rather serves as an instru- st of implementation. One might well ask o Tim Gallwey can discuss the frightening ase of danger, the fear of falling, in his ok, Inner Skiing, 6 in the terms of a "game". sthere anything playful about these "life n death" encounters with art or sport? dern pedagogy is attempting to answer this id of question.

Let us examine a typical improvisatory die used by Margaret Rowell and begin to ok in the realm of the idiolog. Perhaps we ould begin with a kinetic idiolog that is sful in establishing a bowing skill. We il need a decisive and brief musical figure un as

The configuration of the bow movement nthis case can range from a simple attack- ease with changing arm levels. The possib- lity for improvisation is great and the idiolog a take on different modes of expression by riations of dynamics, rhythm, tempo, texture xtimbre and each improvisation can be trans- ted by direct physical contact with the uil's bow arm.

The implementation can be varied as well allowing the pupil different degrees of sical activity ranging from a quasi-passive ding" on the teacher's movement to an almost tive, self-directed movement. Eventually, idiolog will be in the possession of the yer and then will be made automatic and ritual through his own will to retrieve it ided by the teacher.

At any point, the teacher may infuse the die with the element of play. One means to t end is a non-instrumental one utilizing e. The treatment of the idiolog is constant. hile miming the gesture, the idiolog is not agined" but experienced. It is always motivated by a genuine ideo-kinetic impulse. It will still have as its genesis the musical image shown in the previous example. What will be present in the experience is a sense of release from the end-gaining attitude of cello playing per se. The element of play will overwhelm the immediate, unintelligent gratification that comes from perfection seeking. With the use of the element of play, we add something powerful to the ingredients of the experience, i.e., an expression through another art form such as mime, for instance. The experience infused with the element of play may allow the pupil to give a different concentration to the means and abandon any undue regard for the achievement of a "perfect result".

If this seems enigmatic when expressed in this way, perhaps one can recall some of the countless examples of end-gaining involved in orthodox methods where the athletic exercising of segmented movements becomes a goal in itself and the pursuit of a gestalt experience involving the totality of the player is lost. Very often the act of assembling such segmented movements into a technique is cause for the utter frustration of artistry. We learn over and over again that the sum of the parts may not be equal to the whole. To remind us of this fact in my own studio, we enjoy a very nice Humpty-Dumpty drawing which hangs on the wall. "Human nature" has decreed that some pupils understand its implication very deeply and others not at all.

We move towards unification of our procedures in order that we may attain a new awareness. Perhaps this act can be guided by Casals' credo and as we approach that which is basic, simple and elemental, we may be able to look within ourselves and hear those inner signals that promise so much, to listen and hear Marcel Marceau's "silent inner song". We may become one with our musical imagery. Writing of the experiences attainable by skiing the 'inner slopes' of self, Tim Gallwey says in the Afterword of his new book Inner Skiing that "this place of perfect peace has always been within us waiting to be sought, but it can be enjoyed only by those who have recognized the limitations of seeking this satisfaction externally". 7 With this thought let us hold firmly to the promise of "Inner Cello Playing" and the remarkable insights it may bring us.

FOOTNOTES

1. Claude Kenneson, "Casals in California", American String Teachers' Journal, Volx X, No. 3, p. 26.

2. Michael Polanyi, The Tacit Dimension, New York: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1966, pp. 1-25.

3. Peter Rudolfi, "Pedagogical Principles in Annotations of Popper's Etudes, Op. 73" (unpublished M. Mus. essay, University of Alberta, 1975), p. 64.

4. Jean Dorcy, The Mime, New York: Robert Speller and Sons, Inc., 1961, p. 32.

5. Ibid, p. 103.

6. Timothy Gallwey (with Bob Kriegel), Inner Skiing, New York: Random House, Inc., 1977, Chapter IV.

7. Ibid, P. 142.

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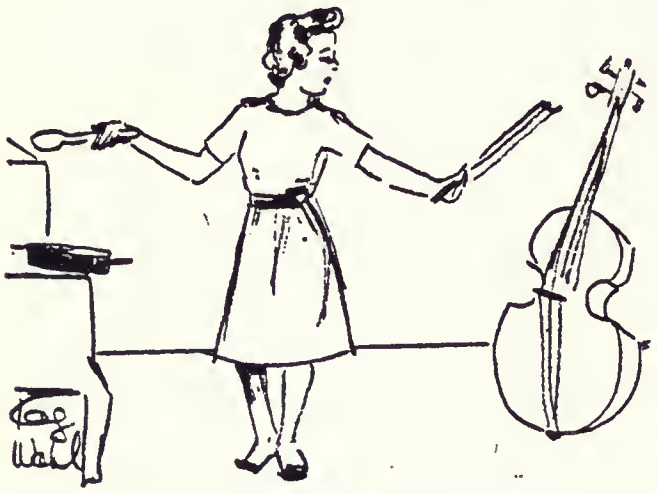
APPENDIX G

2-S ★ Oakland Tribune, Sunday, Oct. 9, 1960

She Also Cooks...



The music she herself has made for thousands of listeners is not as important to Margaret Avery Rowell as the fact that she has helped young people create their own.

Her career as a musician began when she was a Technical High School student, where she started to play the 'cello at the age of 13. "I began with Herman Trutner Jr. there," she recalls, "he was my inspiration for studying.

"And it was three of us from Tech who started the Arion Trio on NBC."

The famed trio played on tour in the South Seas, but otherwise she has followed her career mostly in this state. She was also with the KGO Little Symphony, and has been soloist for the Orpheus Club and for groups throughout California.

Now assistant professor of music at San Francisco State College, she was on the Mills faculty for five years, instructing in 'cello, and besides this teaches 'cello and chamber music for the University of California Extension Division and does what private teaching she has time for.

MRS. ROWELL

"What I enjoyed most, I think," she said, "was the two summer schools in chamber music at Mills for young people—among the 22 who attended so many went on ahead. There was Hiro Imamuro, who just got the Pacific Musical Society prize in piano, Justin Blasdale, who's played piano twice in the San Francisco Symphony's young people's concerts, and 'cellists like Steve Gebhart, Kathleen Johnson, Susan Minor, all prize winners.

"I'm interested in giving students the same start whether they're going to be professionals or not, so they can always enjoy their chamber music."

She herself studied with Horace Britt, solo 'cellist of the San Francisco Symphony who now is in charge of chamber music for the University of Texas, and the late Stanislaus Bean among others. Although she says she is "not much of a belonger," she's been a board member of the Alameda County Music Teachers, is a member of Mu Phi Epsilon, professional music honor society, Amphion Club, California 'Cello Club, the Berkeley Piano Club. She and her husband, retired U.C. Prof. Edward Z. Rowell, belong to the Sierra Club, and their summer trips are the Rowells' greatest recreation. Her father, the late Lewis B. Avery, was assistant superintendent of the Oakland Schools, and the library in the administration building is named in his honor.

She followed her career while also being a wife and mother—her son, Galen Avery Rowell, now being a U.C student. (She, incidentally, received her degree there in music and sociology.) But her homemaking duties may have influenced her career, because she insists:

"I think it's awfully hard for a woman to enter the field as a concert performer, but to be able to earn her living in some way in which she can also be in her home is excellent. Because I think a woman is putting things wrong end to if she merely goes after a solo career and foregoes marriage. I believe that living a full, normal life is much more important than going after the prizes—unless you're so endowed that you just must go to it."

The Rowells entertain frequently, and she wishes she had time for more. She does the cooking—"I love to cook. It's the greatest relaxation I can ask for, and my recipes are practically all my own concoctions, subject to constant variation."

Her favorite, an omelette, so far has no name. It's made like this:

For each person use 1 egg, 2 tablespoons milk, a pinch salt, and beat lightly. On the table, have an electric frying pan going at 360 degrees, well buttered. Pour in egg mixture topped with about ¼ cup crab (fresh or canned), ¼ cup celery chopped in thin slices, jack or sharp cheese in small pieces. As soon as omelette begins to brown, roll top over gently with pancake turner, (like jelly roll to keep the filling in), let sit in pan about 2 minutes till all ingredients heat and blend. Mrs. Rowell often puts in grated raw zucchini, or thinly sliced water chestnuts; sometimes adds 1 teaspoon soy sauce diluted with 2 tablespoons water. Instead of crab, she may use thin slices of ham or beef; sometimes she adds chopped tomatoes — "any combination I want," says the culinary artist.

Variations on a theme by Rowell. —KAY WAHL

Photos by Mike Maloney

Eighty-five cellists filled the Hellman Hall stage Saturday afternoon for the tribute

A Birthday Tribute to a Master Teacher

By Robert Commanday

The Bay Area is the cello center of the nation, and the reason for it was paid an extraordinary birthday tribute Saturday afternoon at the San Francisco Conservatory. Eighty cellists — actually, 80 plus five to grow on — crowded onto the stage of Hellman Hall and serenaded Margaret Rowell, the master teacher.

MARGARET ROWELL
An inspiration

Rowell has been inspiration, guide and source of love and energy to many times 80, plus an untold number more through her master classes around the country and the teachers she has taught. Saturday some of that flowed back to her.

First it came in sheer tone, the noble sound of 85 cellists, playing under Dennis de Coteau, arrangements of Bach (the "Break Forth" and "Passion" chorales, Air, Sarabande and Gavottes from the D major Cello Suite). Thrown in for fun was a Tambourin by Giardini (elephants dancing).

Next came a screening of Rowell on a video documentary made some nine years ago, "Prelude to String Playing." The audience chuckled as the figure on the screen described those principles, exercises and the homely teaching props most of those present had learned from her and were still using. The part of her big "family" that was there re-lived something dear as they watched her demonstration with student subjects — a tiny, serious, adept Sophie Lau (then 7), Emmanuel Vakakis (17), Carol Morrow (15).

There were her teaching metaphors, the "tripod" position or "bear hug" of the instrument, the "baby clutch" grip, the "grasshopper," the "finger-fall," the "swan." "The powerhouse is in the back, with the electric current flowing to the fingertips," she said.

"The artist controls, is in charge of that plant." Summing up, she returned to her "ultimate principles of the great simplicities: beautiful tone, true rhythm, clear intonation and musical understanding."

No tribute to Rowell would be complete without Bonnie Hampton, her outstanding pupil, but long since her teaching colleague and a distinguished artist. Hampton, with violinist David Abel and pianist Nathan Schwartz — in other words, the Francesco Trio — gave a glorious, affirming performance of the Brahms B major Piano Trio, first movement. Carol Morrow, now about 24 and working towards her masters degree at the conservatory, with Julie Nishimura at the piano, gave an intense, secure and vivid account of Ginastera's "Pampeanas No. 2."

Before the audience adjourned to the cake and refreshments in the lobby, Margaret Rowell was brought on to the stage, radiant as she responded to her 80th birthday gift, "There's no more beautiful sound in the world, a sound that would send us into outer space... I just jump out of bed every morning and say, 'Look, I'm still here!' "

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